Hafa Adai!

Marianas visitor arrivals up 340% in November 2022. PAGE 3
Options for foreign workers after termination of employment. PAGE 5

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Ex-Finance chief sued for over $36K in Yutu OT pay

By KIMBERLY B. ESMORES
kimberly_esmores@saipantribune.com
REPORTER

Larson

Attorney General Edward Manibusan has filed another lawsuit in Superior Court, this time against former Department of Finance secretary Larissa Ann Larson in her individual capacity, for the allegedly excessive overtime pay she received from Super Typhoon Yutu recovery efforts.

Manibusan, through OAG Chief Solicitor Robert Glass Jr., filed the lawsuit last Tuesday, accusing Larson of receiving over $36,000 in illegal overtime compensation following the onslaught of Super Typhoon Yutu.

The lawsuit identifies Larissa Ann Larson as the defendant in this case but *Saipan Tribune* archives spell her name as Larrisa Larson.

According to the 15-page

See SUED on Page 4

3 sites ID'd for solar grid farms

By LEIGH GASES
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CORRESPONDENT

The Commonwealth Utilities Corp. has already identified three possible locations for solar power grid farms, with the one to be built on Saipan expected to occupy approximately 33 hectares of land and will include Battery Energy Storage Systems.

As CUC continues to work on expanding its cur-

See SOLAR on Page 4

DPW chief faces illegal OT suit

By KIMBERLY B. ESMORES
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REPORTER

Ada

The Office of the Attorney General continues to go after CNMI government employees who allegedly received excessive amounts in overtime compensation following the onslaught of Super Typhoon Yutu back in 2018. One of the OAG's most recent targets is Department of Public Works Secretary James A. Ada.

Attorney General Edward Manibusan filed the lawsuit against Ada in the Superior Court yesterday, alleging illegal Typhoon Yutu related overtime compensation.

See DPW on Page 4

Finance chief summoned to talk about BOOST

By KIMBERLY B. ESMORES
kimberly_esmores@saipantribune.com
REPORTER

Ada

The joint committee that's looking into the Torres administration's Building Optimism, Opportunity and Stability Together, or BOOST program has summoned Finance Secretary David Atalig to appear before the committee and testify in

See FINANCE on Page 4

THE FRIENDLY ISLAND
Rota, or Luta in the Chamorro language, is the southernmost island of the CNMI and the second southernmost of the Marianas archipelago after Guam. It's also known as the "Friendly Island" for its people's sincere hospitality and waving at total strangers is a way of life.
MARK RABAGO

INSIDE

BUSINESS
Tokyo Mart EX has reopened at the old Bank of Saipan building in Garapan.

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ENVIRONMENT
The U.S. Postal Service will sharply increase the number of electric-powered delivery trucks.

PAGE 14

LIFE & STYLE
Season three of " Tom Clancy's Jack Ryan," starring John Krasinski, returns to Amazon Prime Video.

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Local

SINMI DONATION

Soroptimist International–NMI Chapter donates 34 gifts to Karidat Social Services' shelter last Dec. 21, 2022, at the Karidat office. The gifts are intended for shelter clients, from infants to adults aged 21. From left, Soroptimist member Yijia Zhao, Soroptimist president Mauren Sabangiol, Karidat executive director Lauri Ogumoro, shelter staff Grace Santos, Soroptimist secretary Pam Brown, Karidat shelter supervisor, and Soroptimist member Jessy Loomis.

CONTRIBUTED PHOTO

Tourism Kiribati aims to develop Sustainable Tourism Indicators

Obst

Lound

The Tourism Authority of Kiribati announced yesterday the appointment of Carl Obst and Mark Lound as sustainability data specialists to support the organization and the Ministry of Tourism, Commerce, Industry & Cooperatives develop suitable indicators to measure the Kiribati tourism industry performance.

Through this project, TAK aims to develop a more holistic understanding of tourism's benefits and costs beyond the traditional measure of International Visitor Arrival and tourism contribution to national Gross Domestic Product per capita. These will include the costs and benefits of tourism to economic development, environmental preservation, and social well-being across Kiribati communities.

Obst is a director at the Institute for Development of Environmental-Economic Accounting Group. He was the lead author and editor of the United Nation's System of Environmental-Economic Accounting, the international standard for government work on accounting for natural capital. Prior to this work, Obst had a long career with the Australian Bureau of Statistics, including time at the OECD. His current work involves projects on natural capital accounting and sustainability measurement within the United Nations system, with the Capitals Coalition and with various companies and governments in Australia and internationally. Obst is a leading player in closing the gap between government and corporate approaches to natural capital accounting.

Lound has extensive statistical experience managing the statistical operations of Tourism Australia and the Bureau of Immigration and Population Research as well as leading teams across economic and social statistics at the Australian Bureau of Statistics. Of particular relevance to this assignment, he has of recent times worked with Pacific Tourism Organisation and PARIS21 on a major assessment of tourism statistics in the Pacific and developed a Pacific Tourism Statistics Strategy, the UNWTO assessing sustainable tourism statistics for Saudi Arabia, and assisted Kiribati with the analysis and presentation of results from their International Visitor Survey.

In the first part of 2022 he completed an assignment working with the ADB and Tourism Fiji to improve methodologies for measuring visitor expenditure in Fiji and provided expert oversight for the UNWTO Workshop on Measuring the Sustainability of Tourism for Asia and the Pacific.

This project is funded through the Asiad Development Banks' Pacific Private Sector Development Initiative and is scheduled to be completed in April 2023. ***(PR)***

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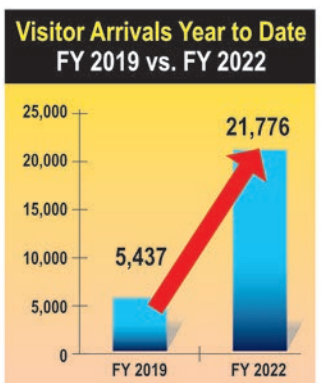
*NO PURCHASE NECESSARY: Void where prohibited. Legal residents of the Territory of Guam and the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands who are 18 or older. Begins December 1, 2022 at 12:00 A.M. ChST and ends on December 25, 2022 at 11:59 P.M. ChSt. To enter, and for Official Rules, odds, and prize details, visit https://bankofguam.com/25-days-of-giveaways-official-rules.
Sponsor: Bank of Guam.

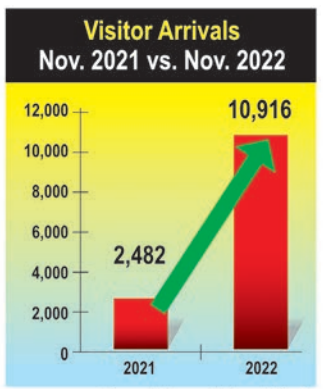
Marianas visitor arrivals up 340% in November 2022

According to the Marianas Visitors Authority, arrivals to the islands of Saipan, Tinian and Rota grew 340% to 10,916 visitors in November 2022, compared to 2,482 visitors received in November 2021.

Visitor arrivals to the Marianas are still 73% lower compared to before the coronavirus pandemic, when 39,717 visitors arrived in November 2019.

A total of 8.723 visitors arrived from South Korea in November 2022, compared to 2,127 visitors in November 2021 following the July 2021 implementation of the MVA's Tourism Resumption Investment Plan. December 2022 arrivals are looking higher, with flights to the Marianas by Asiana Airlines, Jeju Air, and T'Way all booked at over 90%





Source: Marianas Visitors Authority

capacity. The Korean won has made small gains in the last month; however, the U.S. dollar remains strong and is costing Korean visitors more to purchase the same amount of service in the Marianas compared to a year ago.

The Marianas received 453 visitors from Japan in November 2022, another exponential increase compared to only three visitors in November 2021. Japanese travel to U.S. destinations has been dampened due to the strong dollar. The Japan government is also offering up to 40% discounts for domestic travel within Japan, influencing many consumers to turn to domestic travel options. Other challenges in attracting visitors from Japan include higher fuel surcharges, a low vaccination rate among children, and travel apprehension among active seniors over age 60.

The Marianas also received 1,065 visitors from Guam, 441 visitors from the U.S. mainland, and a combined 234 additional visitors from all other destinations in November. ***(MVA)***

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STK	MODEL	WAS	NOW!
22H298A	2020 MITSUBISHI MIRAGE G4 ES	$15,265	$12,995
18R279	2018 KIA FORTE S	$17,638	$14,995
21H047A	2018 HYUNDAI KONA SPORT	$22,258	$15,995
21D129A	2018 HYUNDAI KONA SPORT	$20,789	$15,995
17P370	2017 TOYOTA COROLLA LE	$20,726	$16,995
17P341	2017 MAZDA 6 SPORT	$18,355	$16,995
16P375	2016 MAZDA CX5 TOURING	$23,499	$16,995
21H079A	2020 HYUNDAI ELANTRA SE	$21,064	$16,995
18P405	2018 HYUNDAI ELANTRA SE	$19,004	$16,995
~~18HS947~~	~~2018 HONDA CIVIC EX-T~~ SOLD	~~$23,458~~	~~$16,995~~
18P393	2018 NISSAN ROGUE SV	$22,661	$17,995
20R292	2020 HYUNDAI ELANTRA SPORT	$24,247	$18,995
22M075A	2015 HYUNDAI GENESIS G80 LIMITED	$24,374	$18,995
21H077A	2013 TOYOTA 4 RUNNER SR5	$23,355	$18,995
18P398	2018 MAZDA CX5 TOURING	$23,263	$19,995
22H186A	2020 HYUNDAI VELOSTER ULT COUPE	$29,120	$19,995
8H054E	2019 HYUNDAI KONA SPORT	$21,651	$19,995

STK	MODEL	WAS	NOW!
17P496	2017 MITSUBISHI LANCER	$20,896	$19,995
17HS1036	2017 FORD MUSTANG CONV	$23,525	$19,995
17HS850	2017 FORD TRANSIT XLT LOW ROOF	$42,381	$19,995
18P397	2018 MAZDA CX5 SPORT	$25,765	$20,995
21D106A	2017 TOYOTA RAV4 SPORT	$23,760	$21,995
18P416	2018 TOYOTA RAV4 LE	$31,648	$22,995
22M032A	2018 HONDA CIVIC EX	$25,840	$22,995
20P476	2020 MAZDA 3 HB PREMIUM	$33,050	$24,995
22M021A	2019 MAZDA 6	$30,118	$24,995
18P345A	2018 HYUNDAI TUCSON LIMITED	$30,451	$24,995
22M050A	2018 TOYOTA CAMRY XLE	$27,271	$24,995
16P387	2016 TOYOTA HIGHLANDER LE	$27,808	$24,995
13P359	2013 TOYOTA FJ CRUISER	$33,890	$27,995
18P344	2018 TOYOTA TACOMA SR5	$34,836	$31,995
20H141E	2018 HYUNDAI GENESIS G90	$24,374	$34,995
18P411	2018 TOYOTA 4 RUNNER	$41,254	$36,995
~~19P367~~	~~2019 HONDA RIDGELINE~~ SOLD	$47,459	~~$38,995~~

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CNMI to host 30th Pacific Power Association Conference

By LEIGH GASES
leigh_gases@saipantribune.com
CORRESPONDENT

Saipan will be hosting the 30th Annual Pacific Power Association Conference in September 2023, according to Commonwealth Utilities Corp. executive director Gary P. Camacho.

The conference is where utility officials, power managers, as well as vendors and businessmen from across the Pacific will convene and hold their general meeting; it is expected to draw over 250 people.

PPA is an association of electricity utilities, organizations, and individuals who have an interest in the operations and development of the power industry in the Pacific Island countries. It is an intergovernmental regional organization founded by the electricity utilities operating in the Pacific countries.

The PPA was established in 1992, which CUC hosted and again in 2002. PPA has a Secretariat Office in Suva, Fiji.

"CUC is pleased to have the opportunity to host once again. …These meetings brought to light many problems that Pacific Island utilities and the power sector market face in common, which could be dealt with effectively through direct cooperation. CUC and the CNMI benefit from the conference, which focuses on current technologies and the future of the utility industry," Camacho said.

PPA members will be visiting Saipan next month to scope out venues, lodging, and to initiate plans for the September 2023 conference.

"CUC looks forward to working alongside the CNMI's private businesses and government agencies for their support as the conference committee moves to solidify its planning," said Camacho.

CUC board of directors pro tem chair Janice A. Tenorio is also pleased with the return of the annual conference to the CNMI after 20 years. "This is a great opportunity for the CNMI to increase its business relations and to network with partners who are from the Pacific region. This conference will also support our local economy, with our visitors looking to shop, explore, and experience what our islands has to offer," said Tenorio.

The 29th annual conference was held in Brisbane, Australia from Nov. 21 to Nov. 24, which Camacho attended.

Currently, PPA has a membership of 25 electricity utilities operating in 22 Pacific Island countries such as the Federated States of Micronesia, Samoa, Australia, Fuji, Guam, Indonesia, and the Philippines.

PPA also has allied members worldwide with interest in the development of the power industry in the Pacific region.

The 29th Pacific Power Association Conference was held in Brisbane, Australia from Nov. 21 to Nov. 24, which Commonwealth Utilities Corporation executive director Gary P. Camacho attended. The 30th conference will be held on Saipan in September 2023.

CONTRIBUTED PHOTO

SUED

From Page 1

lawsuit submitted to the Superior Court, Manibusan, in his official capacity as the attorney general of the Commonwealth, claims that the CNMI was harmed because of the authorized overtime pay received by Larson.

The OAG further argues that Larson was not entitled to overtime and so should be directed to return all the money she was paid in overtime.

"[Manibusan] brings this action on behalf of the people of the Commonwealth, who are harmed and have been harmed by the excessive compensation of Larissa Larson, a Commonwealth government employee who was not entitled to typhoon emergency premium compensation, overtime, or extra pay for work performed during the declared major disaster and state of significant emergency relating to Super Typhoon Yutu, or for work directly involved with typhoon recovery and repair work and providing assistance to those members of the Commonwealth adversely affected by Super Typhoon Yutu," said Glass.

As relief, the OAG wants the court to issue a judgment of $36,775.43 against Larson, or other such amount as may be proved at trial for recovery of unlawful typhoon premium payments, overtime payments, or extra payments not authorized by law, without valid appropriation, and in excess of the salary ceiling.

Manibusan also wants the Superior Court to declare that the personnel regulations authorizing payment of typhoon emergency premium pay, overtime, and extra pay do not apply to gubernatorial appointees; that the director of Personnel and the governor lack the authority to authorize additional compensation except as provided by law; and that compensation in excess of the salary ceiling cannot be authorized except as provided by law.

According to the lawsuit, Larson's total compensation in fiscal years 2019 and 2020 exceeded her statutory salary of $70,000, which is against the law.

On Jan. 7, 2019, the defendant received gross wages in the amount of $36,775.43 as typhoon emergency premium pay, Glass said. However, she returned a portion of this premium pay by making a payment of $9,200.58.

DPW

From Page 1

According to Manibusan, Ada received over $32,000 in typhoon premium pay that he should not have been entitled to.

As relief, Manibusan is asking the court to issue a judgment of $32,033.86 for recovery of the allegedly unlawful typhoon premium payments, overtime payments, or extra payments not authorized by law, without valid appropriation, and in excess of the salary ceiling.

Aside from returning the money, the AG also asks the court to issue a declaratory judgment declaring that the personnel regulations authorizing payment of typhoon emergency premium pay, overtime, and extra pay do not apply to gubernatorial appointees; that the director of Personnel and governor lack the authority to authorize additional compensation except as provided by law; and that compensation in excess of the salary ceiling cannot be authorized except as provided by law.

According to the lawsuit, Ada's total compensation in fiscal years 2019 and 2020 exceeded his statutory salary of $54,000, which is against the law.

In total, Ada received typhoon premium pay in the total gross amount of $32,033.86 with $26,698.67 paid in fiscal year 2019 and $5,335.19 paid in fiscal year 2020.

According to the lawsuit, the defendant received typhoon emergency premium pay on multiple occasions and his typhoon emergency premium pay was paid at a rate of 2.5 times his base salary.

On Nov. 30, 2018, the defendant received gross wages in the amount of $5,870.65 as typhoon emergency premium pay.

The following month, on Dec. 22, 2018, Ada allegedly received gross wages in the amount of $4,215.58 as typhoon emergency premium pay

That same month, on Dec. 31, 2018, the defendant received gross wages in the amount of $5,533.15 as typhoon emergency premium pay.

On Jan. 8, 2019, the defendant again received gross wages in the amount of $5,679.19 as typhoon emergency premium pay.

On Jan. 18, 2019, Ada received gross wages in the amount of $5,400.10 as typhoon emergency premium pay,

Finally, on Nov. 1, 2019, the defendant received gross wages in the amount of $5,335.19 as typhoon emergency premium pay.

SOLAR

From Page 1

rent renewable energy portfolio, it is also looking into setting up solar systems on Rota and Tinian.

Based on a newly established Integrated Resource Plan, CUC is now working on the engineering design and preliminary development of a 20-megawatt photovoltaic utility-scale solar system.

For Saipan, which only has one main baseload power plant, "it's imperative that we don't affect that baseload supply," said CUC executive director Gary P. Camacho. "There are several different things that we are preparing for. We want to make sure CUC does it correctly and implements the 20-megawatt utility-scale solar systems in a manner that is non disruptive to our community."

He said that CUC also has another grant for a power grid stability study, which will investigate the dynamics and the impact of renewable sources connecting to the existing grid. "We want to make sure that we address all the protection, relays, and a variety of equipment at the power plant to ensure that the renewables penetration is intermittent throughout the day and doesn't affect the power plant," he added.

Camacho reiterated that "we've been working for years on this, but it's very important for us to be able to ensure that we do it in a manner that is, again, non-disruptive and positive so we can maximize the savings."

He assured that CUC has and always will be committed to provide clean energy by incorporating new technology to help reduce the CNMI's dependence on fossil fuels "to protect our environment and inevitably lower utility rates."

FINANCE

From Page 1

the House of Representatives' ongoing investigation.

Atalig, who ultimately manages both federal ARPA (American Rescue Plan Act) and CARES Act (Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security Act) funds—funds that were used to finance the ongoing BOOST program—was summoned by the Judiciary and Governmental Operation Committee yesterday morning to answer a few questions regarding the program.

However, upon facing the joint committee, Atalig requested that his appearance be rescheduled. "I am formally requesting to reschedule my appearance to testify regarding the BOOST program. Since my subpoena notification last Dec. 1, the Office of the Attorney General appointed assistant attorney general Dustin Rollins to represent me in these proceedings until just last Monday, when I was informed by AAG Rollins that the attorney general has authorized me to obtain outside legal counsel to represent me in my scheduled hearing. With the last-minute notice to seek other counsel, it has been difficult to find an attorney who is available, non-conflicted, and able to represent me. As I finalize my personal representation, I have been advised not to testify today," he said.

After calling a short recess, Way and Means Committee chair Rep. Donald Manglona (Ind-Rota) granted Atalig's request but stated that he is compelled to return and testify today at 3:30pm.

Following last Tuesday's testimony by John Arroyo, Bank of Saipan CEO and president and BOOST program administrator, it was learned that Atalig personally submitted documents and BOOST applications for various local businesses, namely Saipan Surf Company and TROVE, which are owned by Atalig's immediate family members.

According to documents acquired by the committee in relation to the BOOST program, correspondence between Arroyo and Atalig implied that the DOF secretary submitted documents for Saipan Surf and TROVE and was using his role as Finance chief to speed up the process for these companies.

The correspondence between Arroyo and Atalig also allegedly showed Atalig asking Arroyo when he could personally pick up the checks, just days after submitting the application packets for Saipan Surf and TROVE despite one of the packets missing a significant number of requirements for the program.

When questioned by Rep. Christina Sablan (D-Saipan) regarding the correspondence, Arroyo claims that he has to go back and look at the records again before confirming whether checks had been awarded to these companies or not.

Options for foreign workers after termination of employment

U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services is providing the following information for nonimmigrant workers whose employment has terminated, either voluntarily or involuntarily. These workers may have several options for remaining in the United States in a period of authorized stay based on existing rules and regulations.

Below is a compilation of options that may be available to nonimmigrant workers seeking to remain in the United States in a period of authorized stay following termination. Please note that not all options below provide employment authorization.

1 60-Day Grace Period

Regulations permit a discretionary grace period that allows workers in E-1, E-2, E-3, H-1B, H-1B1, L-1, O-1, or TN classifications (and their dependents) to be considered as having maintained status following the cessation of employment for up to 60 consecutive calendar days or until the end of the authorized validity period, whichever is shorter (See 8 CFR 214.1(l)(2)).

During this period, workers may be able to maintain their nonimmigrant status if a new employer timely files a petition on their behalf with an extension of stay request (e.g., an H-1B change of employer petition for a worker in H-1B status).

Alternatively, workers may be able to remain in the United States in a period of authorized stay if they timely file an application to change to a new nonimmigrant status (such as B-2 visitor nonimmigrant status) or an application for adjustment of status, if eligible (see below for a detailed overview of options).

Workers who are unable to timely file a change of status application or find a new employer who timely files a change of employer petition for the worker, may be required to depart the United States at the end of this grace period.

2 Portability to a New Employer

Portability rules permit workers currently in H-1B status to begin working for a new employer as soon as the employer properly files a new H-1B petition with USCIS, without waiting for the petition to be approved. More information about H-1B portability can be found on our H-1B Specialty Occupations page.

Also, a worker with an adjustment of status application (Form I-485) that has been pending for at least 180 days with an underlying valid immigrant visa petition (Form I-140) has the ability to transfer the underlying immigrant visa petition to a new offer of employment in the same or similar occupational classification with the same or a new employer. This is commonly referred to as "porting." More information about porting can be found in the USCIS Policy Manual.

3 Change of Status

Workers may use the up to 60-day discretionary grace period to apply to change their nonimmigrant status, which may include changing status to become the dependent of a spouse (e.g., H-4, L-2). Some individuals in a dependent nonimmigrant status may be eligible for employment authorization incident to status, including spouses of E-1, E-2, E-3, or L-1 nonimmigrants (See USCIS Policy Manual).

In addition, some spouses of H-1B workers may be eligible for work employment authorization if certain requirements are met.

Other possible nonimmigrant options include student status (F-1) or visitor status (B-1 or B-2). Note that, by statute, B-1 and B-2 nonimmigrant visitors are specifically precluded from "performing skilled or unskilled labor" in the United States. Certain F-1 students, by regulation, may engage in limited employment. For more information, please see our Change My Nonimmigrant Status page.

Potential pathways for noncitizen STEM professionals can be found on our Options for Noncitizen STEM Professionals to Work in the United States page.

Note: The timely filing of a non-frivolous application to change status will toll, or stop, the accrual of unlawful presence until the application is adjudicated. For example, if an individual files a non-frivolous application to change status before the end of the applicant's 60-day grace period, they will not accrue unlawful presence while the application remains pending even after the 60-day grace period has elapsed. If the application is ultimately approved, then the individual's status is changed and is considered to have been in a period of authorized presence the entire time the application was pending. If the application is denied, then the individual starts to accrue unlawful presence the day after the denial decision. Please see our Unlawful Presence and Inadmissibility page for more information.

4 Change of Status and Employer

Workers may use the up to 60-day discretionary grace period to seek a new employer-sponsored nonimmigrant status in the same or different status. For example, depending on the specific facts presented, an L-1 worker may be eligible for new employment under the TN, E-3, or H-1B1 classifications. The timely filing of a non-frivolous change of status application will prevent the accrual of unlawful presence until the application is adjudicated (see above). Such a filing alone will not, however, confer employment authorization in the new position during the pendency of the application, and will not extend employment authorization if the original classification is no longer valid. Some petitions may be eligible for premium processing for an additional fee.

5 Adjustment of Status

Some workers may be eligible to file a self-petitioned immigrant visa petition concurrently with an adjustment of status application. Examples of immigrant classifications that are eligible for self-petitioning include EB-1 Extraordinary Ability, EB-2 National Interest Waiver, or EB-5 Immigrant Investors. Workers with a pending adjustment application are generally eligible to remain in the United States and obtain an Employment Authorization Document (EAD).

Period of Authorized Stay - Compelling Circumstances Employment Authorization Document

Workers who are the beneficiary of an approved employment-based immigrant visa petition (Form I-140) may be eligible for a compelling circumstances EAD for up to one year if they:

- do not have an immigrant visa available to them in the Department of State's Visa Bulletin, and face compelling circumstances.

Note: A compelling circumstances EAD is a discretionary stopgap measure intended to assist certain individuals on the path to lawful permanent residence by preventing the need to abruptly leave the United States. Workers who begin working on a compelling circumstances EAD will no longer be maintaining nonimmigrant status but generally will be considered to be in a period of authorized stay and will not accrue unlawful presence in the United States while the EAD is valid. More information about eligibility requirements and the application process can be found on our Employment Authorization in Compelling Circumstances page.

ON THE WEB

- USCIS Policy Manual: https://www.uscis.gov/policy-manual

6 Expedite Criteria

Some circumstances may warrant expedited adjudication, including applications to change status to a dependent status that includes eligibility for employment authorization. For example, an application to change status from H-1B to L-2 may be eligible for expedited adjudication to prevent severe financial loss. See the How to Make an Expedite Request page for additional information.

7 Departure from the United States

Workers may choose to depart the United States. For H-1B and O workers who chose to depart the United States after involuntary cessation of employment, the reasonable costs of transportation to the worker's last place of foreign residence must be borne by the H-1B employer or by the O employer and O petitioner, as applicable (See 8 CFR 214.2(h)(4)(iii)(E) and 8 CFR 214.2(o)(16)).

Once abroad, H-1B holders may seek U.S. employment and readmission to the United States for any remaining period of their H-1B status. Those seeking another classification for which they may be eligible can complete the application or petition process abroad and seek readmission to the United States.

The above information is now available on our new Options for Nonimmigrant Workers Following Termination of Employment page. ***(USCIS)***

VACANCY ANNOUNCEMENT NO. 22-02

United States District Court for the Northern Mariana Islands

Case Administrator

Permanent, Full-Time Position - Location: SAIPAN, NORTHERN MARIANA ISLANDS (CNMI) Starting grade: CL-24 step 1 to CL 26 Step 25 ($44,553 to $67,769 which includes 12.45 % COLA) (Ultimate pay potential CL 26 ($67,769 - $88,137) by progressive performance and career salary progression)

Opening Date: December 19, 2022 • Applications received by January 3, 2023 will be given priority.

Position Overview:

This is a mid-to-full qualified operational court support position. The Case Administrator will review, process, and maintain records of court cases and handle the progression of cases to final disposition. Additional duties will be assigned as Relief Courtroom Deputy, and as Procurement Specialist. Other duties include cashiering, mail processing, customer service, scanning and copying documents, and organizing and shelving library materials. This position includes full federal employment benefits, with paid leave and holidays, health insurance, life insurance, and federal retirement benefits. Obtain a copy of the complete position description at https://www.nmid.uscourts.gov/employment

Minimum Qualifications and Preferred Qualifications:

High school graduate or equivalent, with at least two years of specialized work experience in applying recurring procedures and using specialized terminology that demonstrate the ability to apply a body of rules, regulations, directives, or laws, preferably in a court or related legal field. Education will not be substituted for required specialized work experience, but additional preference will be given for college graduation. Applicants should demonstrate sound ethics and judgment, be able to communicate effectively (orally and in writing) and have above-minimal skill in the use of office productivity software and online research skills. Additional preference will be given for skill in using automated case management systems.

Citizenship Requirement:

Applicants are required to be U.S. citizens or aliens who are authorized to work in the United States.

Notice to Applicants:

Excepted service appointments are "at will" and may be terminated by either the court or the employee at any time for any reason. Selectees may be subject to a background check or investigation and suitability determination; and may be subject to an updated background investigations every five years. Employees are subject to the Judicial Code of Conduct. Direct bank deposit of pay is required.

Application Procedure:

Each applicant is required to submit a Cover Letter, Resume, and an AO-78 application form. (Questions 18, 19, and 20 on page 5 of the AO-78 need not be answered.) AO-78 forms are at: https://www.uscourts.gov/forms/human-resources-forms/application-judicial-branch-federal-employment or may be picked up at the U.S. District Court. Position is open until filled; applications received by January 3, 2023 will be given priority.

We prefer you to email signed applications as a *single PDF file* to: HR@nmid.uscourts.gov

You may deliver signed applications to:

Clerk of Court
United States District Court
for the Northern Mariana Islands
3rd Floor, United States Courthouse, Gualo Rai, Saipan

The United States District Court is an Equal Opportunity Employer.

'MAKING THE WORLD A BETTER PLACE'

UOG Fanuchånan 2022 graduates receive diplomas

Close to 250 graduates received their diplomas on Dec. 18 at the University of Guam Calvo Field House during the Fanuchånan 2022 commencement.

Dr. Joleen Aguon, a daughter of Guam, and UOG alumna, gave the commencement speech. She hoped to inspire the new graduates about her journey, from powering through late nights to complete her Bachelor of Science degree in biology at UOG, completing her Doctor of Medicine at the University of Hawaii John A. Burns School of Medicine in Honolulu, and ultimately coming home to Guam.

UNIVERSITY OF GUAM

Luis R. Baza, center, receives his honorary Doctor of Laws degree during the Fanuchånan 2022 Commencement Dec. 18 at the University of Guam Cavfo Field House.

UNIVERSITY OF GUAM

University of Guam senior vice president and provost Anita Borja Enriquez, left, joins Fanuchånan 2022 valedictorian Cherissa Christina Ollet Adonay, left, and UOG president Thomas W. Krise.

UNIVERSITY OF GUAM

University of Guam graduates proudly display their diplomas during the Fanuchånan 2022 Commencement Dec. 18. at the Calvo Field House.

Aguon is the associate administrator of Clinical Services and assistant associate administrator of Medical Services at Guam Memorial Hospital. She is a familiar face and voice among healthcare front-liners in the fight against COVID-19.

The road to becoming a physician was difficult, Aguon said, but she did not give up: "I held on, I cried, I dug deep and with the support of my family and friends, I kept going."

"Do not set limits for yourself or you will never know your full potential. ...Impossible will exist if you do not make an effort," Aguon said to the graduating class.

Valedictorian Cherissa Christina Ollet Adonay now holds a bachelor's degree in elementary education.

"Teachers are more than just 'glorified babysitters,'" she said. "We are the people who set the fundamental foundations for the future generations to come. So, I'd like to ask you all to take a moment and think about all the teachers who made a significant impact on your life. And thank them because without teachers, you wouldn't be sitting where you are today without us."

UNIVERSITY OF GUAM

University of Guam graduates show their diplomas during the Fanuchånan 2022 Commencement Dec. 18. at the Calvo Field House.

Before the graduation ceremony, Adonay said she is grateful for how her parents, Cristina Ollet and Wilfredo Adonay, immigrants from the Philippines, raised her with the values of hard work and resiliency, and to focus on her education.

She urged her fellow graduates to "make the most out of every day and be present and in the moment."

The commencement on Sunday capped off the 70th year anniversary of UOG.

"We've spent this year appreciating the accomplishments of the students, faculty, staff, administrators, alumni and community supporters of our institution over seven decades," president Thomas W. Krise said. "And today's ceremony focuses our attention on why this institution exists: to produce superb graduates who go on to make our island, our region, our country, and our world better places to live."

"On behalf of all of the employees of UOG, I thank our graduates for learning with us, for challenging us to think in new and different ways, and for your commitment to making the world a better place for all of us and for those who come after us," he added.

Luis R. Baza, former chairman of the Civil Service Commission board, and a deputy director at the Port Authority of Guam, received an honorary Doctor of Laws degree.

Watch the recording of the commencement at www.facebook.com/UniversityofGuam ***(UOG)***

UNIVERSITY OF GUAM

The University of Guam's Fanuchånan 2022 graduates are seen at the commencement ceremony Dec. 18 at the Calvo Field House.

UNIVERSITY OF GUAM

Dr. Joleen Aguon, commencement speaker, addresses the University of Guam graduates during the Fanuchånan 2022 Commencement Dec. 18. at the Calvo Field House.

21 children graduate from the CHCC H.O.M.E. Visiting Program

The Commonwealth Healthcare Corp. recently celebrated the graduation of 21 children from the Healthy Outcomes for Maternal and Early Childhood, or H.O.M.E., Visiting Program. These participants include families of young children who were enrolled during infancy or prior to birth and remained in the program for at least three years. There were 12 graduates from the island of Saipan, three from Rota, and six from Tinian.

The CHCC offers H.O.M.E. Visiting Program services on a voluntary basis to families in the CNMI. The program is a voluntary, home-based service ideally delivered prenatally through the early years of a child's life. It provides social, emotional, health-related and parenting support and information to families, and links them to appropriate resources.

By participating in home visiting, some examples of services families may receive are:

■ Connections/referrals for pregnant women to prenatal care;

■ Connections/referrals for infants and children to well-child visits;

■ Transportation assistance to medical care

■ Early support to parents in their role as a child's first teacher;

■ Help in creating a safe and healthy environment for a young child to thrive in; and

■ Parenting skills and support that decrease the risk of child abuse.

Depending on the goals identified by a family and based on developmental and risk assessments, a family may work with a home visitor from the prenatal period until a child turns 3 years of age with an option to stay in the program until the age of 5. Through consistent and scheduled home visits, parents and caregivers are supported toward improving their family's health and provide better opportunities for their children.

The Commonwealth Healthcare Corp. recently celebrated the graduation of 21 children from the Healthy Outcomes for Maternal and Early Childhood, or H.O.M.E., Visiting Program. CHCC

The CHCC staff and management would like to wish all the graduates and their families the best.

For more information on how to enroll, call 670-664-8701/2 or email yuline.fitial@chcc.health. ***(CHCC)***

High surf advisory and small craft warning out

A high surf advisory remains in effect until 6am today, Thursday. Large breaking waves of 8 to 10 feet will be present along north facing reefs of the Marianas. Also, a small craft advisory remains in effect until 6am today. This means that wind speeds of 21 to 33 knots are expected to produce wave conditions hazardous to small craft.

These conditions will create dangerous swimming and surfing conditions and localized beach erosion.

Based on the information received from the National Weather Service in Guam and compiled at the CNMI Emergency Operations Center State Warning Point, a northwest swell, generated by strong to gale-force winds behind a cold front located south of Japan, continues to affect the Marianas. This will keep hazardous surf along north facing reefs. Inexperienced swimmers should remain out of the water due to dangerous surf conditions. East winds of 15 to 20 knots will be present with frequent gusts up to 25 knots and seas 8 to 10 feet in Marianas coastal waters.

The public is urged to stay out of the water along north and east facing reef lines. Swim near a lifeguard. If caught in a rip current, relax and float. Don't swim against the current. If able, swim in a direction following the shoreline. If unable to escape, face the shore and call or wave for help.

The combination of a northwest to north swell and an east trade-wind swell will maintain seas hazardous to small craft operations. Winds are also expected to remain elevated through last night.

Inexperienced mariners, especially those operating smaller vessels, should avoid boating in hazardous conditions. ***(Saipan Tribune)***

DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC WORKS
CNMI GOVERNMENT

INVITATION TO BID
ITB NO.: DPW23-ITB NO. 42300021

SUBMISSION DATE: January 11, 2023 TIME: 10:00 A.M.

"Chalan Kanoa Road and Drainage Improvement Project, Saipan"

COPIES OF THE SPECIFICATIONS MAY BE OBTAINED AT THE TECHNICAL SERVICES DIVISION, DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC WORKS, LOCATED ON SECOND FLOOR, OLEAI JOETEN COMMERCIAL CENTER, SAN JOSE, SAIPAN, DURING REGULAR WORKING HOURS.

THE PROVISIONS OF THE CNMI PROCUREMENT REGULATIONS, NMIAC SECTION 70-30.3-725 AND 70-30.3-730 PROHIBITING GRATUITIES, KICKBACKS AND CONTINGENT FEES SHALL APPLY.

The project package will be available on or after **December 09, 2022** at Technical Services Division, Department of Public Works, located on Second Floor, Oleai Joeten Commercial Center, San Jose, Saipan.

A non-refundable payment of **One Hundred Dollars ($100.00)** is required for each set. Payment must be made to the CNMI Treasurer and a receipt of payment must be presented when obtaining the Scope of Work at DPW Technical Services Division required for each set.

There will be a **Pre-bid Conference** for this project on **December 27, 2022**, 9:00 a.m. local time at the Department of Public Works Conference Room 2nd Floor, Oleai Joeten Commercial Center Office, Saipan. The Prospective bidders are encouraged to familiarize themselves with the site. All question regarding this project must be submitted in writing no later than 4:30 p.m. local time on **January 04, 2023** to **Mr. Anthony A. Camacho, Director of Technical Services Division,** 2nd Floor, Oleai Joeten Commercial Center, Saipan or fax to (670) 234-3547. Response to questions shall be shared with prospective bidders

THE CNMI GOVERNMENT RESERVES THE RIGHT TO REJECT ANY OR ALL BIDS, OR PORTIONS THEREOF, AND WAIVE IMMATERIAL DEFECTS IF TO DO SO WOULD BE IN THE BEST INTEREST OF THE CNMI GOVERNMENT.

/S/ JAMES A. ADA
SECRETARY, DPW

/S/ FRANCISCO C. AGUON
ACTING DIRECTOR,
DIVISION OF PROCUREMENT SERVICES

COMMONWEALTH UTILITIES CORPORATION
OFFICE OF THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

INVITATION FOR BIDS
CUC-IFB-23-009

SUPPLY & DELIVERY OF POWER DISTRIBUTION ANNUAL MATERIALS

The Office of the Executive Director for the Commonwealth Utilities Corporation is soliciting competitive sealed bids from qualified vendors for the Supply and Delivery of Power Distribution Annual Materials for Saipan, Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands.

Prospective Bidders must pre-register with the CUC Procurement & Supply Division. The Bid Package may be obtained from the CUC Procurement and Supply Office, 3rd Floor, Room No. 3, Joeten Dandan Commercial Building, Saipan, between 7:30 a.m. to 11:30 a.m. and 12:30 p.m. to 4:00 p.m., Monday through Friday, except on government observed holidays, upon completion of registration and presentation of a receipt evidencing a non-refundable payment to the CUC Treasury Section, by cash, check or credit card in the amount of $100.00 (non-refundable) for one IFB package set.
CUC may award a contract to more than one firm for the materials, based on bids for "Commodity Groups".

One (1) original and Five (5) hard copies must be submitted in a sealed envelope marked "CUC-IFB-23-009, Supply & Delivery of Power Distribution Annual Materials, Saipan, CNMI" to CUC Procurement & Supply Division, 3rd Floor, Room No. 3, Joeten Dandan Commercial Building, P.O. Box 501220, Dandan, Saipan MP 96950, **no later than 10:00 a.m. (ChST) on January 19, 2023**, at which time they will be publicly opened and read aloud. Bids mailed via postal or courier service must be received on or before due date and time. Bid shall be submitted on the provided Bid Forms. Bids will be required to be submitted under a condition of irrevocability for a period of 60 days after submission. Late submissions and conditional bids will not be considered. An electronic copy of the entire submission is also required to be sent via email to CUC Procurement & Supply Division via email address, marcela.tenorio@cucgov.org.

A *Bid Guarantee* of not less than fifteen (15%) percent of the total bid price must accompany the bids. The security deposit may be in cash, certified check, cashier's check, or bid bond executed by a surety company holding a certificate of authority from the United States Secretary of Treasury or other surety acceptable to the Attorney General. Surety Company must be authorized to do business in the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands.

All insurers' questions, concerns and qualification shall be handled by the Department of Commerce Office of the Insurance Commissioner (OIC). The OIC is tasked with regulating and monitoring compliance to the CNMI's Insurance Code (Title 4, Division 7). *Bidders are required to submit a clearance from the OIC certifying their insurer of choice is in compliance with the CNMI's Insurance Code.*

This Invitation for Bids does not commit CUC to the award of a contract or contracts, nor to pay any cost incurred in the preparation and submission of bids in anticipation of a contract. Bidders are advised that CUC assumes no responsibility in any act of omission on the part of the bidders due to lack of information or understanding of the bid requirements in the course of Contractor's preparation of a bid under the contract. Bidders are required to comply with all CNMI and applicable Federal Laws. This bid and the ensuing contract shall be executed pursuant to the CUC Procurement Regulations. All responses to this Invitation for Bids should take into account any and all taxes, including excise tax, which will become the obligation of the bidder, awarded a contract.

Questions or requests for clarification will be entertained only from registered bidders and must be submitted in writing no later than **10:00 AM (C1hST) on December 29, 2022** to Manny B. Sablan, CUC Purchasing Administrator, via email address manny.sablan@cucgov.org with a copy to Marcela Tenorio, CUC Senior Purchasing Technician via email marcela.tenorio@cucgov.org; Joseph Crisostomo, CUC Power Division Purchasing Technician via email joseph.crisostomo@cucgov.org and Alfred Palattao, Jr., CUC Power Division Engineer via email alfred.palattao@cucgov.org.

CUC reserves the right to reject any or all bids for any reason and waive any defects in said bid proposal, if in its sole opinion, to do so would be in the best interest of CUC. All bids shall become the property of CUC.

GARY P. CAMACHO
Executive Director

MANNY BOYER SABLAN
Purchasing Administrator

Opinion

Hafa Adai!
Saipan Tribune
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EDITORIAL

How old is 'old,' and when is a president 'too old'?

President Joe Biden turned 80 on Nov. 20, and so far, he has given every indication he plans to run for re-election in 2024. If he were to win, his second term would conclude not long after his 86th birthday.

Too old?

One of Biden's would-be opponents has previously said he thinks not. Former President Donald Trump, 76, who has announced he will run again, once declared, "I would never say anyone is too old," adding at the time that Biden and other rival candidates were making him "look very young."

America is being led by a president well into what most people would describe as old age. But as Trump pointed out, there's old and then there's "old."

Most people associate "old" with changes that go beyond a few gray hairs. As people grow old, inevitably, the heart works harder, the skin feels different, sight and hearing weaken and energy declines. Yet we all know people who seem to defy old age, working effectively and energetically well into their 80s.

The Constitution requires presidents to be at least 35 years old, but it sets no upper limit, and clearly some octogenarians are more capable than others.

Without directly addressing Biden's age, Vice Adm. Vivek Murthy, America's surgeon general, acknowledged as much to the Tribune Editorial Board earlier this month. "There is such a wide range between your actual age and how you perform and function and show up in the world," Murthy observed.

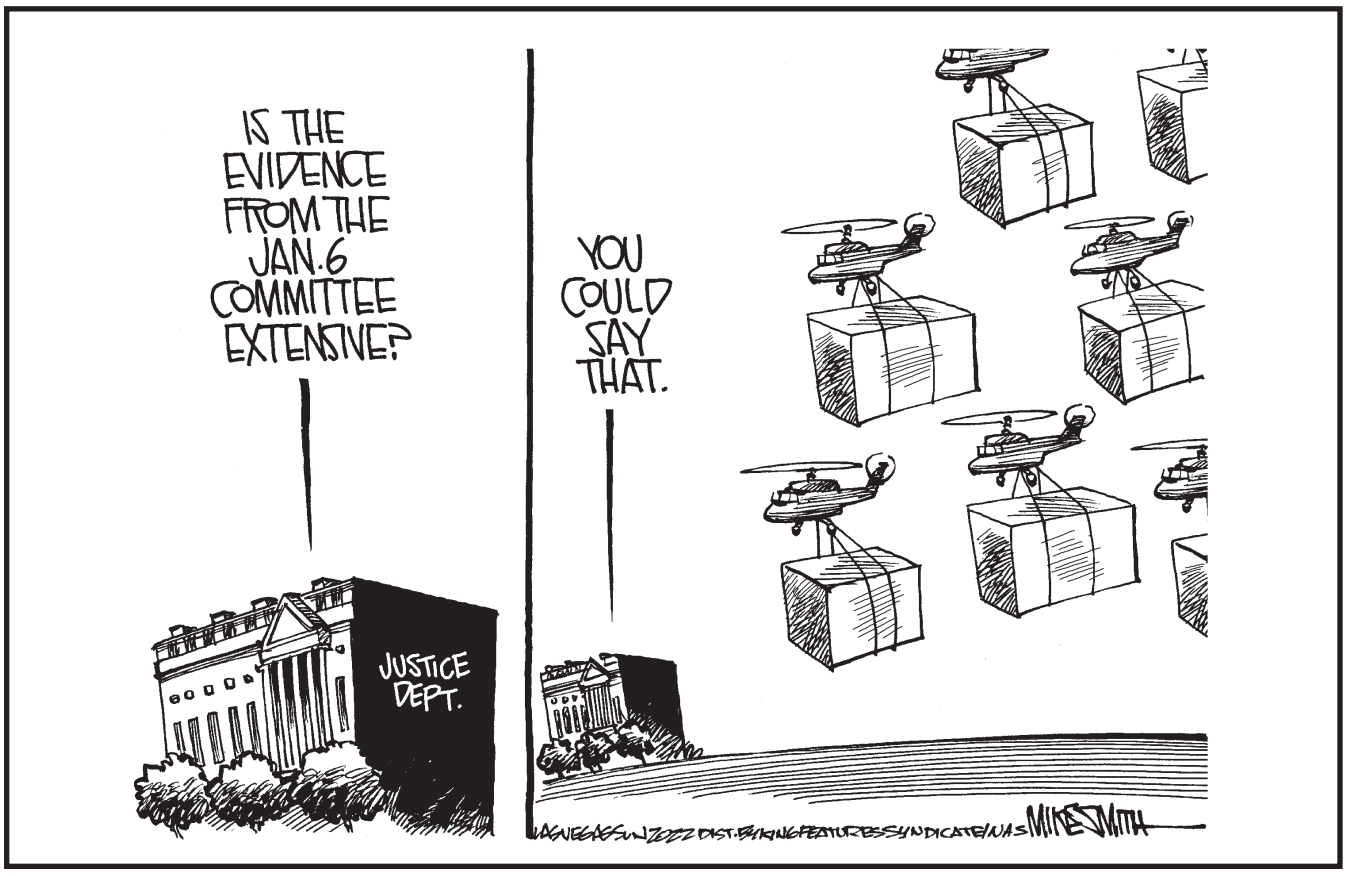
"Thanks in part to advances in medicine and a greater understanding about how to stay healthy through a combination of nutrition, physical activity, medical interventions and sleep and focus on mental health," Murthy said, "we're learning how people can be functional and contribute to society and enjoy their lives at ages that 30 or 40 years ago people would not have thought possible."

Research supports Murthy's perspective. But try telling a youngster that 80 isn't "old." Much depends on who is making the assessment of what age is "old," and the range can vary dramatically from person to person. In one 2021 study, researchers interviewing 300 adults at a Montreal hospital elicited answers ranging from 45 to 100.

The surgeon general recalled that as a young physician he got hooted down by his senior peers when he described a 48-year-old patient as "elderly." Full membership in AARP is open to anyone 50 and older, though it accepts members below that age — and invitations to join the retiree group often arrive, to the shock of recipients, years ahead of the big 5-0.

A recent survey of 2,000 Americans pinpointed the age at which people consider themselves old at a surprisingly low 57. The World Health Organization states that in most of the developed world, old age is considered to begin at a

See OLD on Page 9



Elon Musk's bid to protect free speech threatens another First Amendment right

By RIYA KOHLI
The Fulcrum

Riya Kohli is the advocacy associate at Interfaith Alliance, a national organization dedicated to protecting the integrity of both religion and democracy in the United States.

For better or for worse, I grew up with social media. I remember jumping on Google+ after school and continuing conversations with friends. I would use Facebook groups to organize class gifts for favorite teachers. Snapchat was for sending funny pictures and maintaining streaks as a way to qualify friendships. Of course, social media platforms are so much more than places to make silly posts for your friends. Platforms are part of a complicated information ecosystem, in which some parts thrive as healthy forums, and other parts spread lies and misinformation, allowing hate and harassment to thrive on and off line.

I also grew up with Indian American immigrant parents. My grandparents tell me the beauty of this country is that people of so many backgrounds and cultures can come here to coexist. But social media, for all its strengths and potential, gives an outsize voice to people who want to spread hate and sow division. When I scroll through the depths of Twitter or accidentally click on a YouTube video that sends my recommendations down a rabbit hole of extremism, it's clear to me that each of us is constantly in danger of being pushed into echo chambers of hate.

Elon Musk's plans for Twitter threaten the very coexistence my grandparents celebrated. Musk's fumbling leadership of the influential social media platform risks the democratic promise of our country. If hate is allowed to run rampant and millions of users feel unsafe, we are failing to live up to that promise.

Musk has positioned himself as a champion of the First Amendment right to freedom of speech. This framing could not be further from the truth. Instead, he has allowed extremists and people with hateful ideologies to expand their reach on Twitter. Musk fired staff in charge of dealing with hateful content on the platform, leaving the company too short-staffed to handle the increase in harmful posts. In the 12-hour period after Musk's ownership of Twitter was finalized, the use of derogatory language toward Black people increased almost 500%.

While concerns about Musk's damaging impact on free speech have been well-documented, the risks to another fundamental right have been overlooked: freedom of religion, which recognizes the right for people of all faiths or none to practice what they believe. Social media is so intertwined with our lives offline that threats to religious freedom are no longer confined to the physical world. Every day that hate is allowed to run rampant and target communities online, the freedom to believe as we choose erodes.

In recent years, harmful content on social media has manifested in physical acts of violence targeting vulnerable communities. A 2021 report from the Anti-Defamation League exposed the harmful effects of online hate on different communities, from an increase in violence against Asian Americans, to antisemitic harassment directed at Jewish members of Congress, to the quadrupling of hateful Facebook posts against African Americans after the murder of George Floyd.

There are too many examples of real-world violence committed by young social media users who encountered increasingly extremist content online. The perpetrator of the devastating attack at a supermarket in a predominantly Black neighborhood in Buffalo, New York, streamed the massacre on Twitch. The shooter wrote a manifesto on Google Docs filled with white supremacist ideology, stating that he was radicalized on 4chan in 2020. The Twitch livestream was taken down in just two minutes, but the video remained on Facebook for over 10 hours, allowing 46,000 people to share it. His actions, and the failure of platforms to identify and take down content like this immediately, created further extremist material for other users to view.

For better or for worse, social media is the most accessible way for people to connect online. Our government has an obligation to protect people of all backgrounds and identities. As backlash against content moderation comes to a head on Twitter, there's no telling how other platforms might adjust their policies in the future. The national conversation around what's happening with Twitter is laser-focused on the whims of a CEO who doesn't seem to understand what he wants. All the while, real people and communities are being hurt.

While people like Musk play games with the ever-growing universe we've created online, our government must devote real time and resources to taming the giant that is the tech industry. Without regulation, and while people from different faiths, backgrounds and identities are harassed on and off social media, this country fails to be a safe haven for the people who need it most. Big Tech and its social media platforms are only getting started—we must ensure that this industry's progress does not come at the cost of our most sacred freedoms.

EDITORIAL POLICY Letters to the editor must include the NAME, VILLAGE ADDRESS, and CONTACT NUMBER of the contributor. Letters that do not have these information will immediately be trashed. Contributions consisting of 500 words or less have more chances of getting published. The *Saipan Tribune* reserves the right to publish a contribution or not; the right to edit submissions for length, accuracy, and clarity; and the right to publish and distribute contributions in print, electronic, or other media formats. Submissions may be sent via snail mail to the 2nd Floor, JP Center, Beach Road, Garapan, Saipan, 96950; fax (670) 235-3740; e-mail to editor@saipantribune.com; or through our website at www.saipantribune.com.

What we should and should not do about kids and social media

By AUBREY KIRCHHOFF
Tribune News Service

Chances are if you've read the news in the past year you've seen a headline like these: It's time to go nuclear. Mark Zuckerberg is choosing profit over children. We need to ban kids from social media … And who could disagree with them? After all, you must be some kind of monster if you don't want to protect children.

Society's reaction to new technology is alarmingly cyclical. When a new technology is introduced and becomes mainstream, there is almost always an outcry against it. Video games make you violent. TV rots your brain. Everything we learn falls by the wayside when some new, more alarming technology is introduced.

Today, the panic is about social media and mental health. Of course children deserve protection. The question is not whether children should be protected. The question is how they should be protected.

The rise of social media seems to coincide with a rise in teenage mental illness and self-harm. The only issue is, the direction of causation is tough to parse. Some research has found a clear negative relationship in that more social media leads to more mental health problems. Other work has found that this is only the case for girls, while boys actually need some social media. To complicate it even further, some research has found no relationship at all when activity logs instead of survey questions track usage.

To be clear, the rates of suicide and self-harm amongs teenagers are on the rise. The loss of someone you care about is a terrifying reality to confront — especially when it is someone so young. Seeing young people struggle is terrifying; however, we should remember our tendency to panic and remember that, without seriously considering the underlying causes, our attempts to help may very well make the situation worse.

So what do teenagers say about social media?

According to reporting from Pew, most teenagers use social media to connect with others or learn new things. Further, the very same documents that the Wall Street Journal used to condemn Facebook indicate that 2 in 5 girls report feeling better about themselves after using Instagram. Overall, teenagers report having a positive experience with social media more often than not.

The urge to leap into action when there is a crisis is strong, especially when it is one that affects younger generations. It is important to remember that, no matter how well intentioned, our attempts to help can backfire. Considering how nuanced the teenage experience with tech is, a complete ban could cause more harm than good.

Instead of trying to ban tech, leaders and parents should be looking to help teens better understand and manage this tech. Here are three suggestions I would endorse.

First, set screen time boundaries. Too much time spent online can be detrimental to children's emotional well-being, but so can complete restriction. The actual healthy amount will vary by child, but researchers have provided a valuable starting point for parents when setting boundaries.

Second, have conversations with your child about their tech usage. Not all screen time is made equal. Time spent using devices to draw, learn and engage directly with peers is not the same as passively consuming content. Conversations are key to understanding how your child engages with technology and what issues they may be encountering.

Third, ensure that screen time does not disrupt activities essential to health — such as exercise, sleep and social interaction. Sleep is an important aspect of health for everyone, but especially teenagers. If your child is sacrificing sleep for time online, then you should be stepping in to help encourage them to engage in healthier behaviors.

Given that the research is not as conclusive as the critics make it sound, we should proceed with caution. Otherwise all we might end up doing is erasing the benefits of social media and creating new problems for those we are trying to help.

Aubrey Kirchhoff is Technology and Innovation Program Associate for The Center for Growth and Opportunity.

Suicide signs to watch for and how to talk about it

By DEEPAK PRABHAKAR
The Baltimore Sun

Dr. Deepak Prabhakar (info@sheppardpratt.org) is the chief of medical staff at Sheppard Pratt, the nation's largest private, non-profit provider of mental health, special education, substance use, developmental disability and social services.

The death by suicide of DJ, actor, dancer, father of three and all-around nice guy Stephen "tWitch" Boss has alarmed and saddened a nation. Not long before his death, tWitch and his wife, Allison Holker, were celebrating their ninth wedding anniversary and posting fun dance videos on social media. Theirs seemed a charmed life of goofiness and love. Perhaps that's why the news that tWitch died by suicide is so shocking to many: He did not fit any of the many unhelpful stereotypes of individuals who take their own lives.

Over the course of my career, I have met with people of all ages, races and life backgrounds who have contemplated taking their own lives. I can attest that there is no one type of person who attempts or dies by suicide. With 47,646 deaths by suicide last year, it is one of the leading causes of death. Men and minorities are particularly vulnerable. Seeking help is often seen as a sign of weakness, a source of shame, and not spoken about publicly. Among Black populations, suicide rates peak during adolescence and young adulthood. The suicide death rate for men is more than three times the rate for women in Black populations. Of particular concern are Black youth; among high-school-age children, a higher percentage of Black youth have attempted suicide in the past year than the overall U.S. population.

TWitch was like so many individuals in our community that we meet every day: The exterior calm and joy he presented in public masked deeper struggles. Often, we cannot guess what someone might be dealing with. When it comes to talking about suicide, we continue to see a rash of public commentary questioning the "need to die" as seemingly everything was "perfect."

In these moments, for us, a shared community of survivors, it's important to lean into our kinder selves a bit more and instead of assuming perfection, acknowledge that human life and experience is complex and you never know what one might be going through in their personal private lives.

It's also not uncommon to see in print or hear phrases such as "they committed suicide," as if someone committed a crime. This phrase has its origin from the times when suicide was considered a crime, an unfortunate reality even to this date for citizens of many countries around the world. Similarly, suicide attempts are often reported as "successful" or "unsuccessful." Phrases such as these are not only abhorrent and counterproductive, but they also are harmful as they foster stigma and make seeking help less likely for those who need it the most. Instead, I would recommend we use terms and phrases like "died by suicide," "suicide attempt" and "survived a suicide attempt" for a compassionate dialogue.

We can also help by bringing awareness to the warning signs and prevention strategies. If you are concerned about the safety of your loved one, there are several warning signs you should watch for. First, have they ever shared thoughts about suicide before? A previous suicide attempt is a significant risk factor. Furthermore, firearms continue to be the leading method of death by suicide. It's important that access to firearms is limited for those in crisis and at risk of suicide. And most importantly, if you feel yourself at risk, seek help immediately. You can call the 988 Suicide and Crisis Lifeline. One can also encourage a healthy lifestyle: diet, exercise, sleep, limiting substance use, connecting with people in real life, limiting media use, talking to a therapist and taking medications as prescribed.

Suicide is a serious public health concern, and we all need to work together to prioritize prevention. As a society, we also need to continue to advocate for greater public and private investment in our region's network of providers to meet this increased need.

Finally, I'll close by speaking directly to any person who has considered suicide: You may feel hopeless or that your life has no value. But I can tell you that's not true! Together, we can create a plan for appropriate interventions including crisis support, medications and therapy.

If your loved one is struggling, encourage them to seek professional help. If you are struggling, seek help. You are not alone.

OLD

From page 8

still-surprisingly low 60. In the U.S., early retirees can begin collecting Social Security at 62, and Medicare typically kicks in at 65.

It should be noted that some predictable health risks correspond with age. At 65, for instance, the risks from COVID-19 become more pronounced, Murthy noted. Korean researchers who studied more than 64,000 emergency-room visits determined that older patients were more likely to be admitted for hospital stays, but the odds were considerably less for the "youngest-old," aged 65 to 74, than for the "oldest-old" group of 85-plus.

Of course, the exceptions to those guidelines make life interesting. Consider "late bloomers," who hit their stride in life at ages many would consider old. Colonel Sanders, of Kentucky Fried Chicken fame, opened his first franchise at 62; Nancy Pelosi became House speaker at 66, after raising five children; and American folk artist Grandma Moses started her painting career in her mid-70s.

Republican President Ronald Reagan, 73 at the time, gave a famous answer to the "too-old" question at a 1984 debate against Democratic nominee Walter Mondale, who was 56. "I will not make age an issue of this campaign," Reagan said. "I am not going to exploit, for political purposes, my opponent's youth and inexperience." Even Mondale laughed.

Leading up to the midterm elections, most Democratic candidates carefully avoided stating that Biden is too old to run again, even if they were thinking it. Should the GOP nominate a much younger candidate than Trump, the contrast with Biden would be impossible to miss, and potentially put a greater focus on Biden's running mate. For his part, the president has said he will discuss running for reelection with his family over the holidays and announce a decision early next year.

We believe Americans should take Murthy's word for it: No age is automatically too old to serve. Still, voters must consider a candidate's capabilities, especially if there were to be a national emergency.

Reagan used humor to defuse the focus on his age, but questions about his mental capacity continued to dog him. He was diagnosed with Alzheimer's disease five years after he left the presidency, though there's no evidence that he had the debilitating illness while in office.

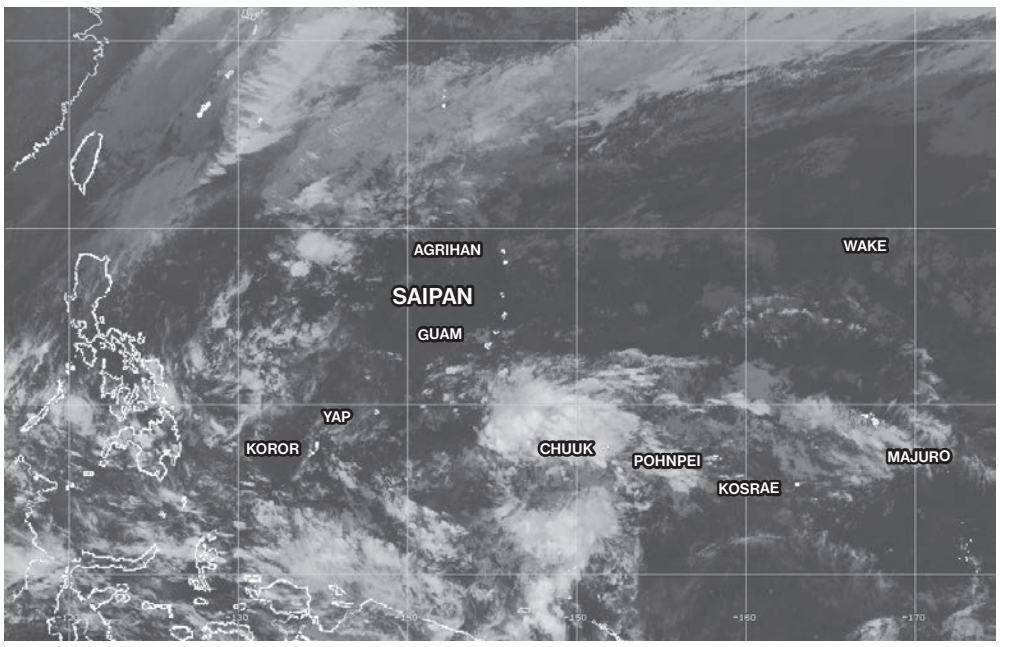
And let's not forget that in the 1984 election, where Reagan's age was very much an issue, he went on to beat that whippersnapper Mondale in a landslide.

The Weather

5-DAY FORECAST FOR SAIPAN AND TINIAN

TODAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY	SUNDAY	MONDAY
Scattered showers. Partly sunny	Showers and possibly a thunderstorm.	Showers likely and possibly a thunderstorm. Mostly cloudy	A chance of showers. Mostly cloudy	Partly sunny
86º 78º	85º 76º	85º 76º	85º 76º	85º 76º

YESTERDAY'S SATELLITE IMAGE



PICTURE TIME: 8:32 AM, WEDNESDAY, DECEMBER 21, 2022

Western North Pacific between equator and 25N from 130E to 180.

Doppler radar shows scattered showers across southern and eastern Guam waters. Showers become more isolated traveling north across the CNMI. Buoy data from Guam and Saipan are reporting seas between 7 and 10 feet.

Satellite image and accompanying information are provided by the National Weather Service. For an updated weather forecast, visit the National Weather Service Guam homepage: www.prh.noaa.gov/guam/

MICRONESIA		▲ ▼ °F
Guam and Rota	Mostly Cloudy	86° / 79°
Palau	Thunderstorms	86° / 79°
Yap	Mostly Cloudy	85° / 80°
Chuuk	Thunderstorms	86° / 80°
Pohnpei	Scattered Thunderstorms	85° / 77°
Kosrae	Mostly Cloudy	85° / 77°
Majuro	Scattered Thunderstorms	87° / 81°

AROUND THE GLOBE		▲ ▼ °F
Auckland	Showers	72° / 61°
Beijing	Sunny	41° / 19°
Hong Kong	Partly Cloudy	73° / 61°
Honolulu	Showers	83° / 73°
London	Mostly Sunny	39° / 36°
Los Angeles	Sunny	78° / 55°
Manila	Thunderstorms	90° / 77°
Melbourne	Thunderstorms	79° / 57°
Miami	Showers	80° / 72°
New York	Cloudy	50° / 46°
Osaka	Partly Cloudy	55° / 41°
Paris	Mostly Cloudy	41° / 34°
Busan	Sunny	46° / 32°
Rome	Showers	55° / 37°
Salem	Partly Cloudy	70° / 54°
San Francisco	Sunny	61° / 48°
Seoul	Mostly Sunny	37° / 21°
Tokyo	Cloudy	46° / 37°
Washington, DC	Partly Cloudy	51° / 45°

DAY	SUNRISE	SUNSET
Today	6:38 AM	5:52 PM
Friday	6:38 AM	5:52 PM
Saturday	6:39 AM	5:53 PM
Sunday	6:39 AM	5:53 PM
Monday	6:40 AM	5:54 PM

DAY	MOONRISE	MOONSET	MOONRISE
Today	4:22 AM	4:17 PM	-
Friday	5:19 AM	5:03 PM	-
Saturday	6:21 AM	5:55 PM	-
Sunday	7:27 AM	6:53 PM	-
Monday	8:34 AM	7:57 PM	-

TIDES: SAIPAN HARBOR TODAY		FEET
6:43 AM	High Tide	1.56
11:39 AM	Low Tide	0.97
5:04 PM	High Tide	1.80
-	-	-

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FLIGHT SCHEDULE AS OF NOVEMBER 1, 2022

DEPARTURES

SAIPAN-GUAM (GUM)

UA117	9:50AM	10:35AM	Daily

SAIPAN- NARITA (NRT)

UA824	7:05AM	9:45AM	1, 3, 5

GUAM-MANILA (MNL)

PR 111	6:00AM	7:45AM	Daily
UA193	7:55PM	11:50PM	2, 5 via Palau
UA183	8:00PM	9:50PM	Daily

SAIPAN-MANILA (MNL)

UA117/183	9:50AM	9:50PM	Daily via Guam
UA117/193	9:50AM	11:50PM	2, 5 via Guam, Palau
OZ624/701	3:40PM	10:35AM+1	3,6 via Incheon

SAIPAN-INCHEON (ICN)

OZ624	3:40PM	7:40PM	3, 6
TW308	4:30PM	8:20PM	3, 4, 6, 7
7C3405	4:35PM	8:25PM	Daily

SAIPAN-BUSAN (PUS)

BX621	3:10PM	6:30PM	3, 7

ARRIVALS

GUAM (GUM)-SAIPAN

UA174	8:00AM	8:46AM	Daily

NARITA (NRT)-SAIPAN

UA825	9:25PM	2:00AM+1	2, 4, 7

MANILA (MNL)-GUAM

PR110	10:05PM	3:55AM+1	Daily
UA184	10:55PM	4:45AM+1	1, 3, 4, 6, 7
UA192	10:40PM	6:30AM+1	2, 5 via Palau
UA184	12:40AM	6:30AM	3, 6

MANILA (MNL)-SAIPAN

UA189/174	12:40AM	8:46AM+1	3, 6 via Guam
UA184/174	10:55PM	8:46AM+1	1, 3, 4, 6,7 via Guam
UA192/174	10:40PM	8:46AM+1	2, 5 via Palau, Guam
OZ704/623	11:50PM	2:40PM+1	2, 5 via Incheon

INCHEON (ICN)-SAIPAN

OZ623	9:00AM	2:40PM	3, 6
TW307	10:00AM	3:30PM	3, 4, 6, 7
7C3406	10:10AM	3:30PM	Daily

BUSAN (PUS)-SAIPAN

BX622	8:00AM	1:10PM	3, 7

LEGEND: Days: Monday (1), Tuesday (2), Wednesday (3), Thursday (4), Friday (5), Saturday (6) and Sunday (7); UA United Airlines; PR, Philippine Airlines; TW, T'Way Air; OZ, Asiana Airlines; 7C, Jeju Air; BX, Air Busan • ETD: Estimated Time of Departure; ETA: Estimated Time of Arrival. *(The Saipan Tribune is not responsible for any changes in the schedule.)*

MARIANAS SOUTHERN AIRWAYS

INITIAL DAILY FLIGHT SCHEDULE AS OF AUGUST 18, 2022

SAIPAN TO TINIAN

DEPARTS	ARRIVES	FREQUENCY
7:00 A.M.	7:15 A.M.	(Except Sundays)
9:50 A.M.	10:05 A.M.	
4:00 P.M.	4:15 P.M.	(Except Saturdays)

TINIAN TO SAIPAN

DEPARTS	ARRIVES	FREQUENCY
7:35 A.M.	7:50 A.M.	(Except Sundays)
10:25 A.M.	10:40 A.M.	
4:35 P.M.	4:50 P.M.	(Except Saturdays)

SAIPAN TO ROTA

DEPARTS	ARRIVES	FREQUENCY
8:10 A.M.	8:40 A.M.	
1:45 P.M.	2:15 P.M.	

ROTA TO SAIPAN

DEPARTS	ARRIVES	FREQUENCY
9:00 A.M.	9:30 A.M.	
2:35 P.M.	3:05 P.M.	

SAIPAN TO GUAM

DEPARTS	ARRIVES	FREQUENCY
11:10 A.M.	12:00 P.M.	
5:15 P.M.	6:05 P.M.	

GUAM TO SAIPAN

DEPARTS	ARRIVES	FREQUENCY
12:30 P.M.	1:20 P.M.	
6:40 P.M.	7:30 P.M.	

STAR MARIANAS AIR, INC.

FLIGHT SCHEDULE AS OF JUNE 1, 2022

SAIPAN TO ROTA

FLIGHT #	DEPARTS	ARRIVES	FREQUENCY
1301	8:30	9:00	Daily
1302	11:00	11:30	Mon/Wed/Fri
1302	12:00	12:30	Tues/Thurs/ Sat/Sun
1303	15:30	16:00	Daily

ROTA TO SAIPAN

FLIGHT #	DEPARTS	ARRIVES	FREQUENCY
3101	9:30	10:00	Daily
3102	13:00	13:30	Tues/Thurs/ Sat/Sun
3102	14:00	14:30	Mon/Wed/Fri
3103	16:30	17:00	Daily

ROTA TO GUAM

LIGHT #	DEPARTS	ARRIVES	FREQUENCY
3401	12:00	12:30	Mon/Wed/Fri

GUAM TO ROTA

FLIGHT #	DEPARTS	ARRIVES	FREQUENCY
4301	13:00	13:30	Mon/Wed/Fri

SAIPAN TO TINIAN

FLIGHT #	DEPARTS	ARRIVES	FREQUENCY
1202	8:00	8:15	Daily
1203	9:00	9:15	Daily
1204	10:00	10:15	Daily
1208	14:00	14:15	Daily
1209	15:00	15:15	Daily
1210	16:00	16:15	Daily
1211	17:00	17:15	Daily

TINIAN TO SAIPAN

FLIGHT #	DEPARTS	ARRIVES	FREQUENCY
2102	8:30	8:45	Daily
2103	9:30	9:45	Daily
2104	10:30	10:45	Daily
2108	14:30	14:45	Daily
2109	15:30	15:45	Daily
2110	16:30	16:45	Daily
2111	17:30	17:45	Daily

Business

By MARK RABAGO
mark_rabago@saipantribune.com
ASSOCIATE EDITOR

Tokyo Mart EX reopens in Garapan

After closing for a few weeks, Tokyo Mart EX has reopened at the old Bank of Saipan building in Garapan.

The Japanese delicatessen closed after a change in management and reopened last Dec. 1, just in time for the holiday season.

Tokyo Mart EX sells mainly Japanese food items, but has been best known for its Japanese-style bento meals.

Just some of its bestselling bento meals are pork kakuni, ground pork and egg, and mini hamburger and bulgogi, grilled herb chicken with vegetables, and marinated fish with pickles.

Tokyo Mart EX's other food items are salmon, mackerel, hamburger, curry, pork ginger, chicken nanban, tonkatsu, katsudon, sukiyaki, soft egg roll, onigiri, inari sushi, menchi hamburger croquette, shumai, steamed meat dumpling, and more.

Tokyo Mart EX is open from Monday to Friday, 9am to 4pm. Starting in January 2023, its business hours will change to 10am-6pm and will also now include Saturdays.

For more information on Tokyo Mart EX, call (670) 233-3849 or go to their Instagram account or Facebook page.

Tokyo Mart EX is located at the old Bank of Saipan building in Garapan. MARK RABAGO

CONTRIBUTED PHOTO
Tokyo Mart EX's bulgogi, grilled herb chicken with vegetables, marinated fish with pickles bento meal.

Trump tax audits required by IRS were delayed, panel says

WASHINGTON (AP)—The IRS failed to pursue mandatory audits of Donald Trump on a timely basis during his presidency, a congressional panel found on Tuesday, raising questions about statements by the former president and leading members of his administration who claimed he could not release his tax filings because of the ongoing reviews.

A report released by the Democratic majority on the House Ways and Means Committee indicated the Trump administration may have disregarded an IRS requirement dating back to 1977 that mandates audits of a president's tax filings. The IRS only began to audit Trump's 2016 tax filings on April 3, 2019, more than two years into Trump's presidency and just months after Democrats took control of the House. That date coincides with Rep. Richard Neal, the panel chairman, asking the IRS for information related to Trump's tax returns.

There was no suggestion that Trump, who has announced a third presidential run, sought to directly influence the IRS or discourage the agency from reviewing his tax information. But the report found that the audit process was "dormant, at best."

The 29-page report was published just hours after the committee voted along party lines to release Trump's tax returns in the coming days, raising the potential of additional revelations related to the finances of the onetime businessman who broke political norms by refusing to voluntarily release his returns as he sought the presidency. The vote was the culmination of a yearslong fight between Trump and Democrats that has played out everywhere from the campaign trail to the halls of Congress and the Supreme Court.

Democrats on the tax-writing Ways and Means Committee argued that transparency and the rule of law were at stake, while Republicans countered that the release would set a dangerous precedent with regard to the loss of privacy protections.

"This is about the presidency, not the president," Neal, D-Mass., told reporters.

Texas Rep. Kevin Brady, the panel's top GOP member, said, "Regrettably, the deed is done."

"Over our objections in opposition, Democrats in the Ways and Means Committee have unleashed a dangerous new political weapon that overturns decades of privacy protections," he told reporters. "The era of political targeting, and of Congress's enemies list, is back and every American, every American taxpayer, who may get on the wrong side of the majority in Congress is now at risk."

Trump spent much of Tuesday evening releasing statements on his social media platform that were unrelated to his tax returns. The IRS didn't immediately respond to a request for comment.

BUSINESS BRIEFS

Musk says he'll be Twitter CEO until a replacement is found

SAN FRANCISCO (AP)—Elon Musk said Tuesday that he plans on remaining as Twitter's CEO until he can find someone willing to replace him in the job.

Musk's announcement came after millions of Twitter users asked him to step down in an unscientific poll the billionaire himself created and promised to abide by.

"I will resign as CEO as soon as I find someone foolish enough to take the job!" Musk tweeted. "After that, I will just run the software & servers teams."

Since taking over San Francisco-based Twitter in late October, Musk's run as CEO has been marked by quickly issued rules and policies that have often been withdrawn or changed soon after being made public.

He has also alienated some investors in his electric vehicle company Tesla who are concerned that Twitter is taking too much of his attention.

Some of Musk's actions have unnerved Twitter advertisers and turned off users. They include laying off half of Twitter's workforce, letting go contract content moderators and disbanding a council of trust and safety advisors that the company formed in 2016 to address hate speech, child exploitation, suicide, self-harm and other problems on the platform.

Musk, who also helms the SpaceX rocket company, has previously acknowledged how difficult it will be to find someone to take over as Twitter CEO.

Hearing on FTX founder's extradition to US set for Wednesday

NEW YORK (AP)—Sam Bankman-Fried will have a hearing Wednesday in a Bahamian court on his possible extradition U.S. in the coming days to face criminal charges related to the collapse of cryptocurrency exchange FTX, a source familiar with the matter told The Associated Press.

The source spoke on condition of anonymity because they were not authorized to speak on the record. In a court in Nassau, Bahamas, on Monday, Bankman-Fried's lawyers said he had agreed to be extradited to the U.S., but the necessary paperwork had not yet been written up.

It was not immediately clear when Bankman-Fried's extradition could occur once it is approved by the Bahamian court.

Bahamian authorities arrested Bankman-Fried last week at the request of the U.S. government. U.S. prosecutors allege he played a central role in the rapid collapse of FTX and hid its problems from the public and investors. The Securities and Exchange Commission said Bankman-Fried illegally used investors' money to buy real estate on behalf of himself and his family.

The 30-year-old could potentially spend the rest of his life in jail.

Rule delay makes big EV tax credit possible early next year

WASHINGTON (AP)—People who want to buy an electric vehicle could get a bigger-than-expected tax credit come Jan. 1 because of a delay by the Treasury Department in drawing up rules for the tax breaks.

The department said late Monday it won't finish the rules that govern where battery minerals and parts have to be sourced until sometime in March.

As a result, it appears that buyers of EVs assembled in North America with batteries made in the U.S., Canada or Mexico will be eligible for a full $7,500 tax credit under the Inflation Reduction Act. The act calls for the batteries' minerals and parts to also come from North America or a country with a free-trade agreement with the U.S. in order to get the full tax break, but that provision has been temporarily put on hold.

The auto industry is watching the situation closely, but it could cause a rush to dealers because most, if not all EVs aren't expected to qualify for the full credit when the rules are all in place.

Nation

Violent California earthquake damages homes, disrupts power

RIO DELL, Calif. (AP)—A powerful earthquake rocked the Northern California coast early Tuesday, jolting residents awake as it shattered glass, shook homes off foundations, damaged roads and left nearly 60,000 homes and businesses in the rural area without power and many without water. At least 12 people were injured.

"It felt like my roof was coming down," Cassondra Stoner said. "The only thing I could think about was, 'Get the freaking kids.'"

When the ground stopped moving, Stoner's family was fine—a daughter even slept through the racket. But when she showed up to work at Dollar General, she found tiles had fallen from the ceiling, shelves were toppled and the contents of the discount store she manages were scattered on the floor.

The magnitude 6.4 earthquake occurred at 2:34 a.m. near Ferndale, a small community about 210 miles (345 kilometers) northwest of San Francisco and close to the Pacific coast. The epicenter was just offshore at a depth of about 10 miles (16 kilometers). Numerous aftershocks followed.

AP

Kenny Ransbottom walks through debris inside his auto parts store after an earthquake in Rio Dell, Calif., Tuesday, Dec. 20, 2022.

Residents in the area known for its redwood forests, scenic mountains and the three county Emerald Triangle's legendary marijuana crop are accustomed to earthquakes. But many said this was more violent and unnerving than the usual rolling motion they experience.

"You could see the floor and walls shaking," said Araceli Huerta, who was still rattled some 10 hours later. "It sounded like a freight train was going through my house."

Damage to buildings and infrastructure was still being assessed. Two Humboldt County hospitals lost power and were running on generators, but the scale of the damage appeared to be minimal compared to the strength of the quake, according to Brian Ferguson, a spokesperson for the California Governor's Office of Emergency Services.

Gov. Gavin Newsom proclaimed a state of emergency for Humboldt County on Tuesday evening.

Approximately 12 people were reported as suffering injuries, including a broken hip and head wound, the Humboldt County Sheriff's Office said at a news conference interrupted by a jarring aftershock. Two people died—an 83-year-old and a 72-year-old—because they couldn't get timely care for "medical emergencies" during or just after the quake.

Damage was mostly focused on the small communities of Rio Dell, Ferndale and Fortuna, Emergency Services Director Mark Ghilarducci said during a news conference in Sacramento.

In Rio Dell, a hamlet of about 3,000 people where destruction was worst, at least 15 homes were severely damaged and deemed uninhabitable and 18 others were moderately damaged, officials said after a partial assessment. They estimated that 30 people were displaced and said that number could rise to 150 after a full tally of damage.

The city's water system was shut down for repairs for as long as two days because of leaks. Portable toilets were set up at City Hall and water was being handed out at the fire house.

A bridge over the Eel River built in 1911 that is the main route into Ferndale was damaged and closed to traffic, requiring a longer detour through the mountains to reach the quaint Victorian town, where all of Main Street is on the National Register of Historic Places.

Caroline Titus, former owner of the Ferndale Enterprise newspaper, said the quake only broke a few windows on storefronts. At her 140-year-old home, plants were knocked over, her coffee bar crashed to the floor, pictures fell off the wall and books tumbled from shelves.

Storm adds uncertainty to strong holiday travel demand

By DEE-ANN DURBIN
AP BUSINESS WRITER

Concerns about illness or inflation aren't stopping Americans from hitting the roads and airports this holiday season. But a massive winter storm might.

Forecasters predict an onslaught of heavy snow, ice, flooding and even tornadoes from Thursday to Saturday in a broad swath of the country, from the Plains and Midwest to the East Coast. A surge of Arctic air will follow. The Christmas weekend could be the coldest in decades.

An early sign of trouble came Tuesday in Seattle, where a winter storm caused at least 192 flight cancellations, according to the FlightAware tracking service. Greyhound also canceled bus service between Seattle and Spokane.

Airlines offered travelers the option of choosing new flights to avoid the bad weather. Delta, American, United and Southwest waived change fees at airports that might be affected.

The Transportation Safety Administration expected Dec. 22 and Dec. 30 to be the busiest days at U.S. airports, with traffic expected to be close to pre-pandemic levels.

Airports said they would work hard to stay open. Chicago's O'Hare and Midway airports said they have 350 pieces of equipment and 400,000 gallons of pavement de-icing fluid between them to keep runways and taxiways clear.

The weather added uncertainty to what was expected to be a busy travel season. Earlier this month, AAA estimated that nearly 113 million people would travel 50 miles from home or more between Dec. 23 and Jan. 2. That's 4% higher than last year, although still short of the record 119 million in 2019.

Most planned to travel by car. About 6% will travel by air, AAA said. Either way, many travelers could find themselves hastily changing their itineraries.

Joel Lustre originally planned to drive from Bloomington, Indiana, to McGregor, Iowa, on Thursday. But he shifted his work schedule, and his wife cancelled an appointment so they could leave Wednesday and beat the storm.

Kurt Ebenhoch, a consumer travel advocate and former airline executive, said the fee waivers for inclement weather that airlines began offering about 20 years ago give consumers valuable time ahead of a storm to figure out alternate days and routes.

But consumers need to read the fine print carefully. Delta, for example, is currently waiving any difference in fares for rebooked travel that happens before Dec. 25 for flights out of the Pacific Northwest. But if the flights are rebooked to a date after Dec. 25, passengers may have to pay the fare difference.

Ebenhoch said passengers have the right to ask the airline to book them on a different airline's flight if there are no options that meet their needs. And if the airline cancels the flight, consumers have the right to a full refund, not just credits for future travel.

The urge to travel and visit family and friends over the holidays appeared to outweigh concerns about illness. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention said coronavirus cases and deaths have increased in recent weeks, and the trio of COVID-19, seasonal flu and respiratory syncytial virus (RSV) continues to stress the health care system.

William Karr was traveling Monday from Los Angeles to Minneapolis, where he planned to meet up with his sister and then drive to Iowa. Karr said he would wear a mask on the flight to avoid getting sick over the holidays, but he has taken other flights unmasked.

"I think the precautions sort of go out the window at a certain point, and people are willing to catch COVID if it means they'll be home with their families," Karr said.

Inflation also didn't seem to be cutting into holiday travel demand. The average round-trip airfare rose 22% to $397 in the second quarter of this year — the most recent period available — according to U.S. government data. That was higher than overall U.S. price inflation, which peaked at 9% in June.

How will asylum in US work after Title 42 ends? No one knows yet

SAN DIEGO (AP)—Show up at a border crossing with Mexico and ask a U.S. official for asylum? Sign up online? Go to a U.S. embassy or consulate?

The Biden administration has been conspicuously silent about how migrants who plan to claim should enter the United States when Trump-era limits end, fueling rumors, confusion and doubts about the government's readiness despite more than two years to prepare.

"I absolutely wish that we had more information to share with folks," said Kate Clark, senior director for immigration services at Jewish Family Service of San Diego, which has facilitated travel within the United States for more than 110,000 migrants released from custody since October 2018.

Migrants have been denied rights to seek asylum under U.S. and international law 2.5 million times since March 2020 on grounds of preventing COVID-19 under a public-health rule that was scheduled to expire Wednesday until U.S. Supreme Court Chief Justice John Roberts ordered a temporary hold. Title 42 has been applied disproportionately to those from countries that Mexico agrees to take back: Guatemala, Honduras, El Salvador and more recently Venezuela, in addition to Mexico. People from those countries are expected to drive an anticipated increase in asylum claims once the rule is lifted.

Many expect the government to use CBPOne, an online platform for appointment registration that was introduced in 2020. The U.S. Customs and Border Protection mobile app has had limited use for people applying for travel permits and for those tracking U.S. immigration court hearings under the now-defunct "Remain in Mexico" policy.

It's expected migrants using the app would make appointments to seek asylum in the United States, but would have to remain outside the country until their slotted time and date.

CBPOne, which some advocacy groups oppose over data privacy concerns, may be impractical for migrants without internet access or language skills. The agency also must get the word out.

Nicolas Palazzo, an attorney with Las Americas Immigrant Advocacy Center in El Paso, Texas, said he worries scammers will charge migrants to sign them up and that CBP's limited processing capacity will result in intolerable waits.

Asia

ASIAN BRIEFS

Hong Kong leader to meet Xi on maiden duty visit to Beijing

HONG KONG (AP)—Hong Kong leader John Lee said on Tuesday he will meet China's President Xi Jinping to report on the city's political, economic and COVID-19 situations during his maiden duty visit in Beijing this week.

Lee will depart for a four-day trip on Wednesday afternoon, he said at a news briefing. Macao chief executive Ho Iat Seng will visit during the same period to explain his administration's work over the past year and its policy focuses next year, the government there said.

Lee promised to reflect Hong Kongers' hopes to reopen the border with mainland China, but he did not say when that will happen. Most checkpoints between Hong Kong and China have been closed during much of the pandemic.

"I believe the central government understands very much about Hong Kong residents' longstanding hopes for reopening the border and having exchanges in a normal manner," he said.

Lee, a former security minister, took over the city's top job on July 1. He was the sole candidate in Hong Kong's chief executive election in May and won over 99% of the vote from a committee stacked with mostly pro-Beijing members.

Last month, Lee asked Beijing to make a ruling that could effectively block prominent pro-democracy publisher Jimmy Lai from hiring a British lawyer for his national security trial hours after the city's top court approved Lai's plan to be represented by Timothy Owen.

Lee said on Tuesday that mainland authorities have shown support to his move, adding that he anticipated Beijing would make the decision as soon as possible.

Lai's trial was originally scheduled for Dec. 1 but has been postponed to next September as the city awaits Beijing's decision.

Japanese court says 45-year-old nuclear reactor can operate

TOKYO (AP)—A Japanese court ruled Tuesday that a 45-year-old nuclear reactor in central Japan can continue to operate, rejecting demands by residents that it be suspended because of safety risks, a decision supportive of the government's push for greater use of nuclear energy because of possible global fuel shortages and the country's pledge to reduce carbon emissions.

The Osaka District Court's decision came just days before Prime Minister Fumio Kishida's Cabinet is expected to approve a new nuclear energy policy that would accelerate restarts of reactors that were idled after the 2011 Fukushima nuclear power plant disaster and extend the operating life of aging reactors.

The Economy and Industry Ministry has drafted a plan to allow extensions every 10 years for reactors after 30 years of operation, while also permitting utilities to subtract offline periods in calculating reactors' operational life beyond the current 60-year limit.

Tuesday's ruling was the first on the safety of reactors that have operated more than 40 years.

Chief Judge Naoya Inoue said the operator of the Mihama No. 3 reactor, Kansai Electric Power Co., has taken adequate steps to prevent equipment degradation to fulfil the requirements of the Nuclear Regulation Authority and obtain an operational permit. The ruling said the reactor's age doesn't require more stringent safety standards than normal.

Pakistani Taliban overpower guards, seize police center

PESHAWAR, Pakistan (AP)—Several Pakistani Taliban detainees overpowered their guards at a counter-terrorism center in northwestern Pakistan overnight, snatching police weapons, taking hostages and seizing control of the facility, officials said Monday.

The incident erupted late Sunday and quickly evolved into a standoff. Pakistani officials later confirmed that one counter-terrorism officer was killed during the takeover at the detention center in Bannu, a district in the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa province and part of a former tribal region.

Police and the military scrambled to deploy troops and special forces to the area but by Monday evening, some 20 hours later, the hostage crisis was still ongoing. According to officials, at least 30 Taliban fighters were involved in the takeover and there were possibly as many as 10 hostages.

The brazen action reflected the government's inability to exercise control over the remote region along the border with Afghanistan. The Pakistani Taliban are a separate group but also allied with the Afghan Taliban, who seized power in the neighboring country last year as U.S. and NATO troops were in the final stages of their pullout from Afghanistan.

Few other details emerged about the takeover, which apparently happened while police were interrogating the Taliban detainees, according to Mohammad Ali Saif, a spokesman for the provincial government.

Saif said the place was surrounded and that officials were trying to negotiate with the hostage-takers. However, he said the "government will not accept any demands of the terrorists" who were being asked by authorities to surrender. Saif earlier said an operation was underway but did not elaborate.

Survivor found from Thai navy ship that sank Sunday

BANGKOK (AP)—Rescuers found a survivor and recovered five bodies from a Thai warship that sank over the weekend in the Gulf of Thailand, navy officials said Tuesday, as hopes faded for two dozen people still missing. Officials acknowledged there were not enough life jackets for all those aboard.

The HTMS Sukhothai, a corvette in service for 35 years, sank Sunday night in rough seas with 105 people aboard. The navy said an earlier tally of 106 people on board was incorrect because one sailor failed to join the journey.

Navy commander Adm. Cherngchai Chomcherngpat said initially at a news conference in Bangkok that two people had been rescued on Tuesday, but later said he had received updated information that only one person was alive and that five bodies had been recovered. According to those figures, 76 people have now been rescued, five have been found dead and 24 are still unaccounted for.

Navy Chief of Staff Adm. Chonlathis Navanugraha said the survivor and the bodies, along with some debris, were found about 60 kilometers (37 miles) from where the ship sank. He said the United States, Britain and Malaysia have offered to help in the search.

The survivor, identified as Chananyu Kansriya, was found floating in the sea at about 3 p.m. and was picked up by a passing cargo ship, Chonlathis said. A navy frigate was bringing him back to shore.

Vice Adm. Pichai Lorchusakul, commander of the 1st Naval Area Command, told reporters that Chananyu was in weak condition and would receive medical treatment on the frigate, which has facilities akin to a mobile hospital.

World

Wartime Ukraine is erasing its Russian past from public spaces

AP

In this photo released by the Dnipro Region Administration, Municipal workers dismantle a monument of Russian writer Alexander Pushkin in the city centre of Dnipro, Ukraine, Friday, Dec. 16, 2022.

KYIV, Ukraine (AP)—On the streets of Kyiv, Fyodor Dostoevsky is on the way out. Andy Warhol is on the way in.

Ukraine is accelerating efforts to erase the vestiges of Soviet and Russian influence from its public spaces by pulling down monuments and renaming hundreds of streets to honor its own artists, poets, soldiers, independence leaders and others — including heroes of this year's war.

Following Moscow's invasion on Feb. 24 that has killed or injured untold numbers of civilians and soldiers and pummeled buildings and infrastructure, Ukraine's leaders have shifted a campaign that once focused on dismantling its Communist past into one of "de-Russification."

Streets that honored revolutionary leader Vladimir Lenin or the Bolshevik Revolution were largely already gone; now Russia, not Soviet legacy, is the enemy.

It's part punishment for crimes meted out by Russia, and part affirmation of a national identity by honoring Ukrainian notables who have been mostly overlooked.

Russia, through the Soviet Union, is seen by many in Ukraine as having stamped its domination of its smaller southwestern neighbor for generations, consigning its artists, poets and military heroes to relative obscurity, compared with more famous Russians.

If victors write history, as some say, Ukrainians are doing some rewriting of their own — even as their fate hangs in the balance. Their national identity is having what may be an unprecedented surge, in ways large and small.

President Volodymyr Zelenskyy has taken to wearing a black T-shirt that says: "I'm Ukrainian."

He is among the many Ukrainians who were born speaking Russian as a first language. Now, they shun it — or at least limit their use of it. Russian has traditionally been spoken more in the eastern and southern parts of the country. Western Ukraine, farther away from Russia, was quicker to shed Russian and Soviet imagery.

Peru Congress opens door to early elections amid unrest

LIMA, Peru (AP)—Peru's Congress tentatively endorsed a plan on Tuesday to hold early elections in an attempt to defuse a national political crisis marked by deadly unrest after lawmakers ousted President Pedro Castillo.

The proposal, approved by 91 of the legislature's 130 members, would push up to April 2024 elections for president and congress originally scheduled for 2026. The plan —which seeks to add one article to Peru's constitution— must be ratified by another two-thirds majority in the next annual legislative session for it to be adopted.

The measure has the backing of caretaker President Dina Boluarte, who took over from Castillo after the former schoolteacher tried to dissolve Congress on Dec. 7—a move widely condemned by even his leftist supporters though it touched off deadly nationwide protests that continue. After the failed move, Castillo was swiftly arrested.

The early elections proposal failed to muster enough votes last week after leftist lawmakers abstained, conditioning their support on the promise of a constitutional assembly to overhaul Peru's political charter — something that conservatives denounce as putting Peru's free market economic model at risk. On Tuesday, they dropped that demand.

"Don't be blind," Boluarte said over the weekend, slamming lawmakers for not listening to voters' demands. "Look at the people and take action in line with what they are asking."

But even as Boluarte seeks to restore order, her caretaker government is being buffeted by fellow leftists. Chief among them is Mexican President Andrés Manuel López Obrador, who has sharply critized Peru's conservative media and business establishment for the classist, sometimes bigoted way it portrayed Castillo during his 17-month presidency.

On Tuesday, Boluarte's government expelled Mexico's ambassador, giving him 72 hours to leave the country, in protest of what it said was López Obrador's repeated and "unacceptable interference" in Peru's internal affairs.

"The statements by the Mexican president are especially grave considering the violence in our country, which is incompatible with the legitimate right of every individual to protest peacefully," Peru's foreign ministry said in a statement.

Environment

Policy, climate, war make 2022 'pivot year' for clean energy

BENGALURU, India (AP)—For renewable energy companies in India, it's a good time to be in business.

One of India's largest renewable energy firms, Renew Power, will be among the corporations big and small hoping for a piece of a $2.6 billion government scheme that encourages the domestic manufacturing of components required to produce solar energy. It's the biggest such incentive in India's history.

Renew Power's CEO Sumant Sinha said the government funds for clean energy send "a strong signal" that the country wants "to become a manufacturing location for renewable energy equipment and a global alternative to China eventually."

"We are excited to be a part of this journey," he said.

The company has over 100 clean energy projects across India and has become the world's tenth largest solar and wind energy company in just over a decade.

Other major governments around the world have been green lighting ambitious renewable energy policies this past year that aim for major expansions of wind and solar energies, along with development of technologies like carbon capture, which captures carbon dioxide, a central cause of climate change, and stores it in the ground. Some of the policies also include tax credits to buy electric vehicles, heat pumps or energy efficient materials for construction.

AP
Gen Nashimoto, of Luminalt, installs solar panels in Hayward, Calif., on April 29, 2020.

The United States signed into law the Inflation Reduction Act, the most ambitious climate legislation in U.S. history, the European parliament passed the REPower EU plan to reduce dependence on Russian fossil fuels and fast forward the transition to clean energy and China announced ambitious schemes to enable the country to meet its 2030 clean energy goals five years ahead of schedule.

Experts say the task is now to build on this momentum in 2023, strengthen energy grid infrastructure and resolve backend issues which slow down the distribution and transmission of clean energy.

"From an energy perspective, 2022 will go down as a pivot year. For the first time, we have discernible proof that fossil fuel demand after 200 years of growth had reached a peak in 2019 and we are now bumping along a plateau before an inevitable decline," said Kingsmill Bond, an energy strategist at the Rocky Mountain Institute, a clean energy non-profit group.

RMI's research has found that global energy demand grew by around six additional exajoules in 2022—enough energy for around 6 million transatlantic flights. This is less than usual year-on-year growth as energy use is getting more efficient, the report said. Solar and wind supply growth this year was also calculated to be about six exajoules.

Bond added that the price of clean energy was getting closer to that of fossil fuels and in some cases it was cheaper.

A report by the International Energy Agency said that oil prices rose well above $100 per barrel in mid-2022 and high gas and coal prices accounted for electricity cost hikes around the world. But increased use of clean energy saved Asian countries, including China and India, a total of $34 billion in the past year, a separate report found.

Energy analysts say that the global energy crisis triggered by the Russian invasion of Ukraine and increasing climate threats such as the disastrous floods in Pakistan have accelerated the clean energy policies and big tickets investments that are needed to transition to renewable energy, especially wind and solar energy, around the world.

The sudden lack of access to fossil fuels and supply chain crunches were also other key reasons for the aggressive tilt towards cleaner energy. For example, Russia's sale of gas to Europe was reduced to a trickle.

Postal Service pledges move to all-electric delivery fleet

WASHINGTON (AP)—In a major boost for President Joe Biden's pledge to eliminate gas-powered vehicles from the sprawling federal fleet, the Postal Service said Tuesday it will sharply increase the number of electric-powered delivery trucks—and will go all-electric for new purchases starting in 2026.

The post office said it is spending nearly $10 billion to electrify its aging fleet, including installing a modern charging infrastructure at hundreds of postal facilities nationwide and purchasing at least 66,000 electric delivery trucks in the next five years. The spending includes $3 billion in funding approved under a landmark climate and health policy adopted by Congress last year.

The White House hailed the announcement as a way to sustain reliable mail service to Americans while modernizing the fleet, reducing operating costs and clearing the air in neighborhoods across the country.

"This is the Biden climate strategy on wheels and the U.S. Postal Service delivering for the American people,'' said White House climate adviser Ali Zaidi.

"It's wonderful that the Postal Service will be at the forefront of the switch to clean electric vehicles, with postal workers as their ambassadors,'' said John Podesta, a senior White House adviser. "It will get people thinking, 'if the postal worker is driving an EV, I can drive an EV, too.''

DeJoy

The U.S. government operates the largest vehicle fleet in the world, and the Postal Service is the largest fleet in the federal government with more than 220,000 vehicles, one-third of the overall U.S. fleet. The USPS announcement "sets the bar for the rest of the federal government, and, importantly, the rest of the world,'' said Brenda Mallory, chair of the White House Council on Environmental Quality.

Postmaster General Louis DeJoy, who came under fire for an initial plan that included purchase of thousands of gas-powered trucks, said the Postal Service is required by law to deliver mail and packages to 163 million addresses six days a week and to cover its costs in doing so.

"As I have said in the past, if we can achieve those objectives in a more environmentally responsible way, we will do so," he said in a statement Tuesday.

DeJoy, a Republican donor and political ally of former President Donald Trump, thanked Podesta and other White House officials for putting aside political differences to "focus on moving the ball forward.''

The new fleet plan is "operationally suitable, financially viable and climate friendly,'' DeJoy said at a news conference outside Postal Service headquarters.

A smiling Podesta shook hands with DeJoy and called him "unforgettable''—a sharp contrast to White House criticism early this year when DeJoy announced a plan that would have made just 10% of the agency's next-generation fleet electric. The White House and Environmental Protection Agency slammed the Postal Service, an independent agency, for underestimating greenhouse gas emissions and failing to consider more environmentally sound alternatives.

Environmental groups and more than a dozen states, including California, New York and Illinois, sued to halt the initial plan and asked judges to order a more thorough environmental review before the Postal Service moves forward with the fleet-modernization program. The Postal Service later adjusted its plan to ensure that half of its initial purchase of 50,000 next-generation vehicles would be electric.

EPA to tighten nitrogen oxide limits for new heavy trucks

DETROIT (AP)—In a little over four years, new heavy truck makers will have to cut harmful nitrogen oxide pollution more than 80% under new standards released Tuesday by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency.

Some environmental and health advocates praised the standards but others said they don't go far enough to curb nitrogen oxide, which can cause issues including respiratory illness, cardiovascular problems and even death.

Problems are more acute in industrial and port areas, causing health problems for low-income residents who live there. The EPA says 72 million people live near freight routes in the U.S.

The standards, coupled with greenhouse gas emission limits coming next year, and government investments, eventually will lead to zero-emissions electric and hydrogen fuel cell trucks carrying most of the nation's freight, the agency said.

"This is just the first action under EPA's clean trucks plan to pave the way toward a zero-emission future," Administrator Michael Regan said in a prepared statement.

The standards, the first update in more than 20 years, limit nitrogen oxide emissions from new semis and other heavy trucks to 35 milligrams per horsepower hour. The current standard is 200 milligrams, the EPA said.

One horsepower hour is the equivalent of energy consumed by working at the rate of one horsepower for a single hour.

EPA officials say catalytic reduction technology is available for truck engine manufacturers to meet the large reduction when the standards take effect in 2027. The agency also says the standards can be met at a reasonable cost. The stronger standard will not change and will remain in place for multiple years, the EPA said.

As the fleet of heavy trucks is replaced by newer vehicles, it should reduce nitrogen oxide pollution by 48% by 2045, the EPA said.

The agency expects greenhouse gas standards and incentives in the Inflation Reduction Act to bring the replacement of all diesel trucks with zero-emissions alternatives, said Margo Oge, a former director of the EPA's transportation and air quality office.

Oge, now a volunteer with the Environmental Protection Network, expects at least half of all new heavy trucks to be powered by batteries or hydrogen fuel cells by 2030.

The Truck and Engine Manufacturers Association said the new standards will be challenging to put in place, but its members will work with the EPA.

"Ultimately the success or failure of this rule hinges on the willingness and ability of trucking fleets to invest in purchasing the new technology to replace their older, higher-emitting vehicles," the association said in a prepared statement.

A group representing independent truck drivers, the Owner Operator Independent Drivers Association, said small business truckers won't be able to afford new trucks, so they'll stay with older, less-efficient ones.

The new rule lets the trucking industry keep making vehicles that pollute the air, the Natural Resources Defense Council said.

Life & Style

Krasinski's 'Jack Ryan' returns to TV after 3-year wait

By ALICIA RANCILIO
ASSOCIATED PRESS

Season three of " Tom Clancy's Jack Ryan," starring John Krasinski, returns to Amazon Prime Video with a storyline that may feel familiar.

We meet Ryan, now stationed in Rome, as he discovers an underground plot by Russia to invade surrounding countries and recreate the Soviet empire.

The episodes were written three years ago, and production wrapped long before Russia invaded Ukraine.

Filming "Jack Ryan" was delayed when the pandemic forced everything to shut down. Krasinski turned his focus to a weekly homemade newscast called " Some Good News," sharing positive stories during a dark time. Like many, he wasn't focused on diet and exercise while in quarantine.

Kraskinski jokes his "Some Good News" shape was ideal because you never saw him standing up as he was always seated like a newscaster. "You didn't even see the bottom half of me. That's where I felt most comfortable," he said.

When it was time to buckle down, Krasinski said he was motivated by the idea that the show would be a reason for many to finally resume working after months of waiting.

"It was actually a very cleansing thing," said Krasinski, who is also an executive producer and helps write the episodes. "I took a great responsibility with all these hundreds of people who were brave enough to put their lives on the line to bring back our industry in some small way.

"It was almost like getting into my best possible shape and self, both physically and mentally, to prepare for something that we knew would be much more different and much more harrowing, but hopefully that much more worth it."

In the new episodes, which begin streaming on Wednesday. Ryan's attempts to alert the CIA to his discovery about Russia result in the the agency turning on him and issuing a Red Notice calling for his arrest and extradition back to the U.S. to face charges. Ryan's former boss James Greer (played by Wendell Pierce) assists as much as he can from the inside, and Ryan seeks out his old pal Mike November (Michael Kelly), who left the agency at the end of season two, to help thwart Russia's plan.

Krasinski and Kelly's relationship on screen provides some moments of levity, amid all the action and looming catastrophe. Kelly, who is known for serious roles such as "House of Cards," says it's a fun departure to have those lighter on-screen moments.

"John will write a lot of those one-liners for me on the day and I'm so grateful I get to have the humor. To get to play something a little closer to myself was such a treat," said Kelly.

"Jack Ryan" has also made Kelly appreciative of the dedication of those who protect us on a daily basis "from the Navy SEALs all the way to Port Authority police officers." He says many are fans of the show and like to talk to him about the realities of the job.

"I tell my kids all the time, '(When) we pass a police officer, say thank you... You see someone in the armed services. You say thank you.' Our veterans, they come home and are so underserved in this country. We need to be doing more and we need to be saying thank you more."

Weinstein dodges sentencing enhancement, faces 18 years

LOS ANGELES (AP)—Harvey Weinstein faces a shorter prison sentence in California after a Los Angeles jury failed to reach a verdict on whether the disgraced mogul planned his attack on a woman he was convicted of raping.

Weinstein

Los Angeles Superior Court Judge Lisa Lench declared a mistrial on the issue Tuesday after the panel reported it could not agree on special allegations that Weinstein planned his assault on a model-actor in 2013, and whether she was "particularly vulnerable."

If the jury had found that either circumstance applied, Weinstein would have faced an enhanced maximum term of 24 years when he is sentenced next year. Tuesday's development means Weinstein, who was convicted of rape and sexual assault charges a day earlier, will face up to 18 years in prison.

Weinstein is currently serving a 23-year prison sentence after being convicted of rape and sexual assault in New York in 2020. He is appealing that sentence, as he will likely do with the California verdict.

Weinstein was charged with raping or sexually assaulting four women, but after a monthlong trial, was only convicted of charges based on one woman's allegations. Jurors acquitted Weinstein of charges based on another woman's account, and were unable to reach a verdict on two other women's allegations.

The panel was brought back Tuesday to hear arguments on the special circumstances allegation. Lench will hold a hearing Jan. 9 to determine the next steps in the case.

Judge allows Sandy Hook cases against Jones to proceed

HOUSTON (AP)—Cases can move forward against Alex Jones regarding the nearly $1.5 billion he's ordered to pay families of Sandy Hook victims over his conspiracy theories about the 2012 school massacre, a federal bankruptcy judge ruled Monday, but the families can't yet pursue collection efforts against the Infowars host.

Judge Christopher Lopez approved an order that attorneys for Jones, his media company and the Sandy Hook families had all agreed to. The order lifts a stay that automatically halted the cases when Jones filed for bankruptcy. Free Speech Systems, Jones' media company, is also seeking bankruptcy protection.

Jones

Lopez approved the order, which prevents the families from pursuing collection efforts, during an hour and a half long hearing that Jones attended remotely.

Jones filed for Chapter 11 personal bankruptcy protection earlier this month in Texas, citing $1 billion to $10 billion in liabilities and $1 million to $10 million in assets.

For years, Jones described the 2012 Sandy Hook massacre as a hoax. A Connecticut jury in October awarded victims' families $965 million in compensatory damages, and a judge later tacked on another $473 million in punitive damages. Earlier in the year, a Texas jury awarded the parents of a child killed in the shooting $49 million in damages.

Caro still working away on fifth LBJ book, no pub date set

NEW YORK (AP)—The good news on Robert A. Caro's long-awaited next book is that he knows the final words.

The bad news is that he's known them for years and remains far from concluding his Lyndon B. Johnson series. Caro, who also wrote "The Power Broker," has published four volumes of "The Years of Lyndon Johnson" over a period of 40 years. Volume 4, "The Passage of Power," came out in 2012.

The fifth volume is expected to cover Johnson's first full year as president, 1964, and continue through the end of his administration in 1969 and his death four years later.

"It is huge," Caro says of the scale of the final book.

Measuring his progress is hard because he doesn't work chronologically. Two years ago, Caro spoke of writing about the year 1967, a time of growing unrest in Black communities and rising opposition to the Vietnam War. Interviewed recently to promote "Turn Every Page," a documentary about Caro and his editor Robert Gottlieb, the author said he is now deep into a section on health care for the elderly before Johnson signed the Medicare and Medicaid Act in 1965.

Caro has always thoughts of his books as not so much the portrait of a man, but of political power and its effects. Taken together, the already published Johnson volumes—which began with "The Path to Power" and include "Means of Ascent" and the Pulitzer Prize-winning "Master of the Senate"—exceed 4,000 pages and feature extended probes into everything from filibusters to the mechanics of a stolen election.

Woman's deceptive trick ends in an angry splash

DEAR ABBY: I recently went out to a bar with some friends. I was the designated driver because I no longer drink. I had a drinking problem, but I have been sober for almost seven years. The majority of the people I socialize with are supportive of my sobriety—except one.

I have been good friends with a guy for several years. The problem is his girlfriend. She keeps mocking me for not drinking. She thinks it's all in my head and has said so to my face. I usually ignore her, but on this particular night, when it was her turn to buy the round, she set the glass down in front of me with a smirk on her face.

I was drinking regular Coke and didn't think anything about it. I thanked her and when I went to take a sip, I smelled the alcohol in it right away. Abby, she had told the bartender to put rum in my Coke. I confronted her, loudly, in front of our friends, and she called me a party pooper. She then announced that it was all in my head, and told me to lighten up. I picked up the drink, threw it in her face and stormed out.

Now my friends are mad at ME for causing a scene and embarrassing HER. I admit I lost my temper, but I feel she was totally in the wrong. I have tried to talk to them about how I felt about her disregarding my sobriety, but it's falling on deaf ears. Is there any way to fix this?

SOBER IN NEW MEXICO

DEAR SOBER: Everyone in that crowd knows you have a problem with alcohol. Your friends should have interceded to stop that woman's bullying when it first started. That she would actually sneak a spiked drink to you was very dangerous, and I'm glad you caught on to the deception. She deserved the reaction she got for trying to sabotage you. "Fix" this by socializing with other members of the group without this couple, or find some new friends.

P.S. That this woman has such a problem with you abstaining from alcohol indicates to me that she has real problems of her own.

■■■■

DEAR ABBY: I am childless—not by choice—and I have a hard time with this topic. I was married for 14 years and divorced at 39. I felt so hurt and betrayed I could barely function much less try to plan for the future and a family. Needless to say, the family I hoped for never happened. My siblings don't have children either.

I don't feel as though I have a real "family," and when holidays, birthdays and Mother's Day roll around, it adds to my stress and depression. It also doesn't help when I meet new people always having to face the question of children. How do you advise someone barely shy of 60 on how to fill this HUGE void in my life and/or cure the heartache that seems to mount as the years roll by?

NOT BY CHOICE IN THE SOUTH

DEAR ABBY
By ABIGAIL VAN BUREN
UNIVERSAL PRESS SYNDICATE

Dear Abby is written by Abigail Van Buren, also known as Jeanne Phillips, and was founded by her mother, Pauline Phillips. Contact Dear Abby at www.DearAbby.com or P.O. Box 69440, Los Angeles, CA 90069.

DEAR NOT BY CHOICE: One of the surest ways to battle the blues is to do something for someone else. On holidays, volunteer to help families who are less fortunate financially than you. Contact a church or a shelter, ask what some of the children might need and bring gifts. It may give you less time to dwell on what you don't have and salve some of the ache in your heart.

■■■■

Good advice for everyone – teens to seniors – is in "The Anger in All of Us and How to Deal With It." To order, send your name and mailing address, plus check or money order for $8 (U.S. funds) to: Dear Abby, Anger Booklet, P.O. Box 447, Mount Morris, IL 61054-0447. (Shipping and handling are included in the price.)

Pastimes

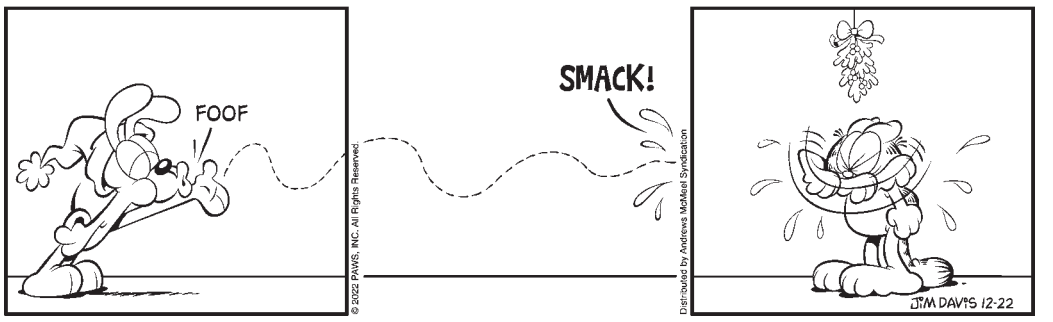
Calvin and Hobbes

By Bill Waterson

MUSH HULLP SMACK
ULLKK... MOM, I'M GUESSING THIS IS BOILED GUANO ON RAW MAGGOTS, BUT I'M (ORRG) CHOKING IT DOWN AS BEST AS MY CRAMPING STOMACH ALLOWS.
THIS IS ANOTHER SPONTANEOUS ACT OF GOOD WILL, SANTA! YOU'D BETTER COME THROUGH IN SPADES FOR THIS!!
MORE MAGGOTS?
SURE! PILE 'EM ON!
© 1992 Watterson/Distributed by Andrews McMeel Syndication
12-22

Garfield®

By Jim Davis



Adam@home

By Bryan Basset

OKAY, DAD. JUST GO SLOW.
I'M NERVOUS.
I FEEL LIKE I'M GOOD UP TO THIS PART. THEN EVERYTHING GOES WRONG REALLY FAST.
THAT'S WHY WE'RE JUST GOING TO TAKE OUR...
...TIME.
DANG IT!!
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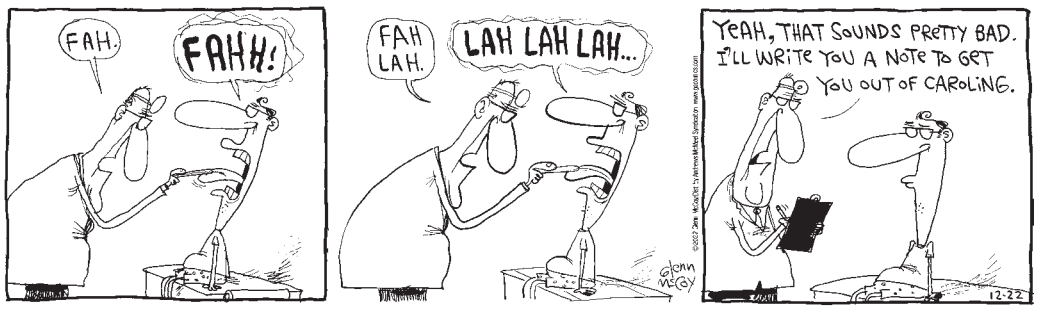
12-22

The Duplex

By Glenn McCoy



CROSSWORD

By Eugene Sheffer

ACROSS

1 Disaster aid org.
5 Earth's neighbor
9 Bankroll
12 Idle of Monty Python
13 Skip
14 "Strange Magic" gp.
15 Computer power-saver
17 German auto
18 Tithe amounts
19 Bee-like
21 Freudian concept
22 Bakery array
24 Avocado dip, for short
27 Day fractions (Abbr.)
28 Frogs' hangout
31 Hockey's Bobby
32 Overseas agreement?
33 Actress Ruby
34 Ran in the wash
36 Pot pie morsel
37 Citi Field team
38 Tax-payer's dread
40 "That's a laugh!"
41 Showy parrot
43 Moved laterally
47 Granada gold
48 Transistor bit
51 Moreover
52 Vega's constellation
53 Emmy-winner Alan
54 Water tester
55 Rip
56 Fly high

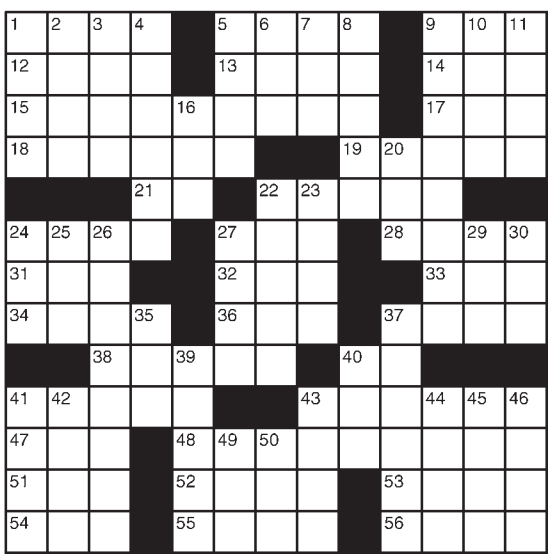
DOWN

1 Suffix with song or gab
2 Perry's creator
3 Carriage
4 Vinegary
5 May honorees
6 Latin 101 word
7 Abolish
8 Porter-house, e.g.
9 Online show
10 Mater lead-in
11 Blue
16 Third degree?
20 Vigor
22 Vinegar bottle
23 China setting
24 Sailor
25 Internet address
26 Three digits after 1
27 Pueblo people
29 Court divider
30 — Moines
35 "Don't Start Now" singer Lipa
37 Curtain fabric
39 Resided
40 Chart-topping song
41 Castle defense
42 River in Tuscany
43 Cicatrix
44 Olympic hurdler Jones
45 Icelandic saga
46 Beloved
49 Caustic cleaner
50 Notable time

Solution time: 24 mins.

S	C	A	N	■	F	T	D	■	E	F	T	S
A	R	C	O	■	L	I	U	■	P	A	R	T
G	A	M	E	F	A	C	E	■	I	C	E	E
E	Y	E	L	E	T	■	L	A	T	E	S	T
■	■	■	S	E	T	■	S	H	O	T	■	■
L	O	L	■	D	E	N	■	S	M	I	L	E
I	D	O	S	■	R	E	V	■	E	M	I	T
P	E	N	N	E	■	T	A	P	■	E	D	S
■	■	■	G	I	R	D	■	T	A	U	■	■
C	O	F	F	E	E	■	I	N	N	A	T	E
A	B	A	T	■	F	A	C	E	L	E	S	S
R	I	C	E	■	O	R	A	■	I	R	A	S
B	E	E	R	■	G	I	N	■	T	O	R	E

Yesterday's answer 12-22



STUMPED? For answers to today's crossword, call **1-900-226-5955**! 99¢ per minute, touch-tone/rotary phones. (18+ only.) A King Features service, NYC.

CELEBRITIES BORN ON THIS DAY: Jordin Sparks, 33; Brooke Nevin, 40; Ralph Fiennes, 60; Diane Sawyer, 77.

Happy Birthday: Change can be liberating if carefully thought through and executed. Don't rush what you want to accomplish this year. Slow down, pay attention to detail and make your life better. Keep your plans simple, doable and affordable, and you'll be happy with the results and feel at ease about the process you choose to reach your destination. Your numbers are 3, 15, 22, 28, 32, 41, 44.

ARIES *(March 21-April 19):* Consider what others want, but don't deny yourself something for the sake of someone else. Be careful how you handle professional situations set in a party atmosphere. Protect your reputation at all costs. Work the room to advance, not to make a scene. ✪✪✪✪✪

TAURUS *(April 20-May 20):* Don't complain; adjust what isn't working for you and move forward. Take control of situations that concern you. Leave nothing to chance, and you'll be happy with the results. A makeover, upgrade or personal growth will lift your spirits. ✪✪✪

GEMINI *(May 21-June 20):* Look at what others do and say before jumping into something that isn't a good fit for you. Pour your energy into fulfilling your dreams and ensuring that the people you care about benefit from your decisions. ✪✪✪

CANCER *(June 21-July 22):* Emotional issues will surface if you aren't honest about how you feel or what you want. Speak up, find out where you stand and press forward in a direction that points you toward a path that makes you happy. Romance is encouraged. ✪✪✪

LEO *(July 23-Aug. 22):* Take care of time-sensitive documents. Reach out to people who make you laugh and arrange to spend downtime rehashing what's transpired this year. Don't get involved in joint ventures or an investment that sounds too good to be true. ✪✪✪✪✪

VIRGO *(Aug. 23-Sept. 22):* You have good ideas, but if you let others interfere with your plans, you won't be happy with the results. Pay attention to details, set things up to your specifications and share with the people you love. Let romance lead the way. ✪✪

LIBRA *(Sept. 23-Oct. 22):* Keep busy and enjoy the festivities. Steer clear of stressful situations or people who tend to bring you down or stand between you and the happiness you deserve. Stop talking about your dreams and start turning them into a reality. ✪✪✪✪

SCORPIO *(Oct. 23-Nov. 21):* Put thought and movement behind your plans. Don't hesitate to bring about changes that make your life easier. Think outside the box, and you'll discover a path that leads you in a direction you won't want to miss. ✪✪✪

SAGITTARIUS *(Nov. 22-Dec. 21):* Pick up the pace. You've got plenty to finish before the year ends. Take care of unresolved matters that have held you back or situations not conducive to achieving your dreams. Take nothing for granted; if you want something done, do it yourself. ✪✪✪

EUGENIA LAST

THE LAST WORD IN ASTROLOGY

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CAPRICORN *(Dec. 22-Jan. 19):* Don't overdo it or make promises you can't keep. Take the time to show others how you feel instead of offering elaborate gifts. More time spent with loved ones will encourage better relationships and a happy home environment and lifestyle. ✪✪✪

AQUARIUS *(Jan. 20-Feb. 18):* Refuse to let someone's indecisiveness cloud your mind or disrupt your plans. Time is running out; taking care of last-minute preparations will help alleviate the stress caused by outside influences. ✪✪✪✪

PISCES *(Feb. 19-March 20):* Emotional confusion is apparent if you or someone close to you sends mixed messages. Be transparent regarding your feelings, intentions and plans. A romantic gesture must come from the heart. Be bold and say what's on your mind, and you'll have no regrets. ✪✪

Birthday Baby: You are hesitant, thoughtful and organized. You are precise and intuitive.

✪: Avoid conflicts; work behind the scenes. ✪✪: You can accomplish, but don't rely on others. ✪✪✪: Focus and you'll reach your goals. ✪✪✪✪: Aim high; start new projects. ✪✪✪✪✪: Nothing can stop you; go for gold.

SUDOKU

Conceptis Sudoku *By Dave Green*

	8	5		2				
								9
			6		4			7
		1	2	8	7	3		
7								4
		9	4	1	5	8		
9			3		1			
3								
				9		1	2	

Difficulty Level ★★★ 12/22

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Sudoku is a number-placing puzzle based on a 9x9 grid with several given numbers. The object is to place the numbers 1 to 9 in the empty squares so that each row, each column and each 3x3 box contains the same number only once. The difficulty level of the Conceptis Sudoku increases from Monday to Saturday.

Yesterday's Answer

7	4	5	1	2	8	3	6	9
3	9	8	7	6	5	4	2	1
2	6	1	4	9	3	7	8	5
9	1	2	6	3	7	5	4	8
4	8	3	2	5	9	6	1	7
5	7	6	8	4	1	2	9	3
6	3	7	9	8	2	1	5	4
8	5	4	3	1	6	9	7	2
1	2	9	5	7	4	8	3	6

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WONDERWORD®

By DAVID OUELLET

HOW TO PLAY: All the words listed below appear in the puzzle — horizontally, vertically, diagonally and even backward. Find them, circle each letter of the word and strike it off the list. The leftover letters spell the **WONDERWORD.**

THE ANTIPODES **Solution: 5 letters**

C	D	O	P	P	O	S	I	T	E	L	C	R	I	C
S	O	I	T	H	E	A	T	E	R	A	Ⓟ	Ⓞ	Ⓛ	Ⓔ
A	R	O	M	E	F	E	T	A	M	I	L	C	M	M
M	M	E	R	E	G	L	G	R	F	L	A	T	A	I
A	E	G	B	D	N	N	A	T	I	A	Y	F	G	T
R	E	H	E	M	I	S	P	H	E	R	E	A	N	D
D	T	O	T	T	U	N	I	R	L	T	L	R	I	N
I	I	N	C	R	A	N	A	O	D	S	Z	C	T	A
A	N	A	E	N	A	L	P	T	N	U	O	R	U	L
M	G	C	G	Q	O	V	O	C	E	A	N	I	D	A
E	D	L	O	P	U	B	E	T	L	S	E	A	E	E
T	E	O	R	E	T	A	W	L	S	O	U	T	H	Z
E	S	V	L	A	T	I	T	U	D	E	U	S	E	W
R	K	N	O	I	T	I	S	O	P	O	W	A	V	E
T	H	E	O	R	Y	H	P	A	R	G	O	E	G	N

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Acting, Aircraft, Angle, Australia, Circle, Climate, Coal, Coordinates, Degrees, Desk, Diameter, Dimension, Drama, Earth, East, Equator, Field, Geography, Half, Hemisphere, Latitude, Magnitude, Meeting, New Zealand, Numbers, Ocean, Opposite, Plane, Play, Polar, Pole, Position, Route, South, Theater, Theory, Time, Travel, Volcano, Water, Wave, West, Zone

Yesterday's Answer: Religion

The NEW **Treasury 50** can be purchased online at www.WonderWordBooks.com, or call 1-800-642-6480.

Knicks rout Warriors 132-94, extend win streak to 8 games

NEW YORK (AP)—Immanuel Quickley scored 22 points, Jalen Brunson had 21 and the New York Knicks rolled to their eighth straight victory, beating the depleted Golden State Warriors 132-94 on Tuesday night.

Quentin Grimes added 19 points and RJ Barrett had 18 as New York extended the longest current winning streak in the NBA.

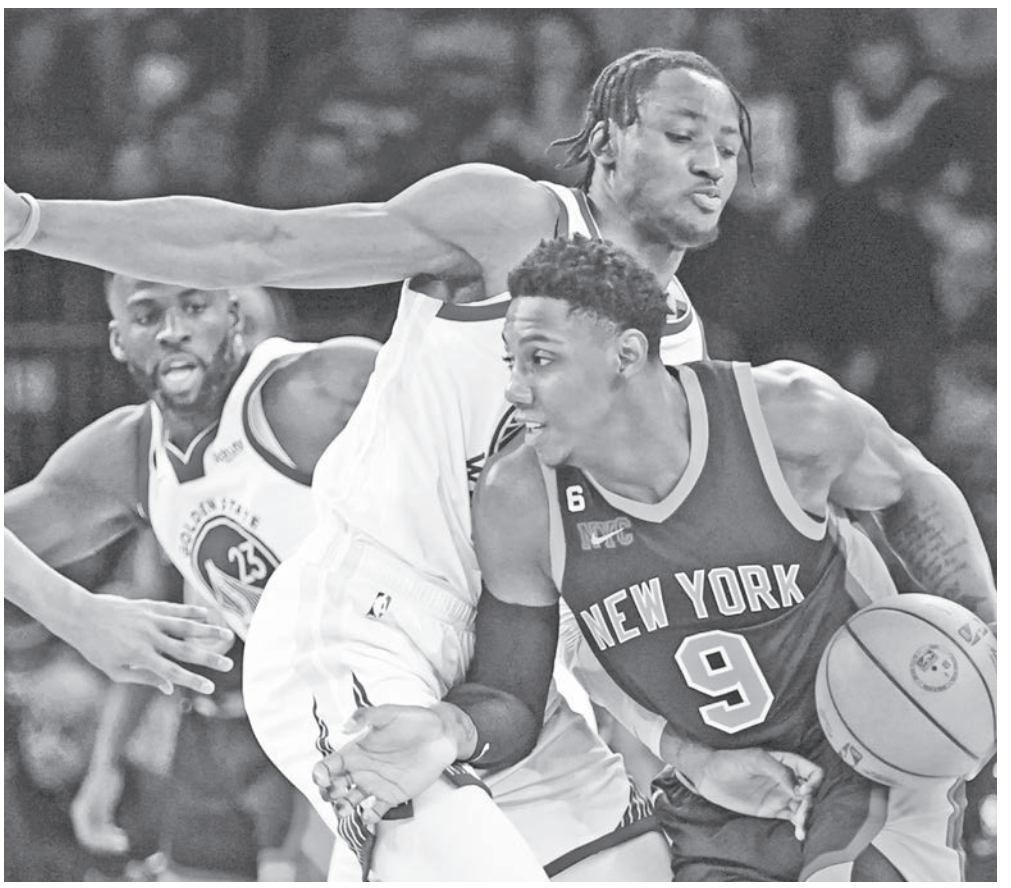
"No one has talked about the streak at all," Brunson said. "Obviously, we tell each other to keep it rolling. But, we're just trying to be the best team we can be and just focus on one day at a time."

Julius Randle finished with 15 points and 12 rebounds, Mitchell Robinson had nine points and 11 rebounds and Miles McBride added 10 points.

"We have a lot of players on this team who are capable of having monster games," Brunson said. "It's not surprising when someone like 'Quick' plays that way or 'Q' having that type of game or even Deuce (McBride) getting double figures. When they do it, it's definitely a plus."

Jordan Poole scored 26 points for the Warriors, who are without Stephen Curry, Andrew Wiggins and other key players. Jonathan Kuminga had 13, while Draymond Green, Klay Thompson and Ty Jerome each had 11.

The Knicks scored the first eight points of the game and never trailed. They led 33-25 at the end of the first quarter.



AP

New York Knicks' RJ Barrett (9) drives past Golden State Warriors' Jonathan Kuminga (00) during the first half of an NBA basketball game Tuesday, Dec. 20, 2022, in New York.

The Warriors pulled within 35-33, but a 3-pointer by Grimes with 4:17 left in the second quarter gave the Knicks a 60-45 lead. New York led 69-56 at halftime.

"Winning naturally gains confidence," Randle said. "But, I'm not going to put much into a winning streak or whatever. It's still December."

Robinson's free throws put the Knicks up 88-67 with 5:37 remaining in the third quarter. They again went up by 21 on Quickley's free throws with five seconds left in the quarter.

Quickley shot 6 for 10 after going 3 for 20 in the previous two games.

The Knicks led 100-81 heading into the fourth, and the Warriors never got any closer.

Svi Mykailiuk's free throws with 58 seconds remaining gave New York its biggest lead of the night and were the final points of the contest.

"The Knicks are in a good groove right now. They totally outplayed us," said Warriors coach Steve Kerr. "We sank tonight. We're trying to hang in there and we will. Another game tomorrow."

Nuggets 105, Grizzlies 91

In Denver, Nikola Jokic had 13 points, 13 rebounds and 13 assists for his second straight triple-double to lead Denver over Memphis in a matchup between the top two teams in the Western Conference.

Jokic followed up his 40-point, 27-rebound, 10-assist performance Sunday night with his sixth triple-double of the season and 82nd of his career. He joined Wilt Chamberlain as the only players to put up those stats in a single game. Chamberlain did it four times.

Aaron Gordon had 24 points and Bruce Brown scored 16 for Denver.

Ja Morant led Memphis with 35 points and 10 assists. The Grizzlies, now tied with the Nuggets in the standings, have lost two in a row following a seven-game winning streak.

Wizards 113, Suns 110

In Phoenix, Kyle Kuzma scored 29 points and Washington stopped its 10-game losing streak by beating Phoenix.

Washington played without Kristaps Porzingis, sidelined with what Wizards coach Wes Unseld Jr. called a "non-COVID illness." But Daniel Gafford filled in at center and had 12 points and eight rebounds as the Wizards won for the first time since Nov. 28, when they beat Minnesota 142-128 in Washington.

Bradley Beal, held to two points in the first half, finished with 27 for the Wizards (12-20), including two free throws to make it a five-point lead with 14 seconds left. Deni Avdija had 16 points and 10 rebounds.

Landry Shamet led the Suns with a season-high 31 points, making a career-high nine 3-pointers. Deandre Ayton had 30 points and 13 rebounds. Devin Booker missed his second straight game with groin soreness after scoring 58 points against New Orleans on Saturday.

Bulls 113, Heat 103

In Miami, Nikola Vucevic had 29 points and 12 rebounds, DeMar DeRozan scored 24 points and Chicago stopped a four-game slide by beating short-handed Miami.

Zach LaVine scored 21 and Coby White added 14 for the Bulls, who used a 30-7 run in the second half to take control.

Bam Adebayo made his first nine shots and scored 27 points. Adebayo also had 12 rebounds for the Heat, who got 19 points from Tyler Herro, 18 from Haywood Highsmith, 14 from Victor Oladipo and 13 from Duncan Robinson.

Miami was without three starters — Jimmy Butler (gastrointestinal illness), Kyle Lowry (left knee soreness) and Caleb Martin (sprained left ankle) — and had its season-best, four-game winning streak snapped.

Jazz 126, Pistons 111

In Detroit, Lauri Markkanen scored 38 points, including a career-high nine 3-pointers, and Utah defeated Detroit.

Jarred Vanderbilt added 18 points and 13 rebounds for the Jazz, who outscored Detroit 65-51 in the second half. Utah had at least 30 points in all four quarters.

Jordan Clarkson scored 21 and Malik Beasley led the second unit with 17 points. Utah lost its previous two games by an average of 24.5 points, including a 122-99 defeat Monday in Cleveland.

Jaden Ivey led Detroit with 30 points. Pistons rookie Jalen Duren had 15 points and 14 rebounds. He has at least 11 rebounds in seven straight games, matching Dwight Howard's 2005 mark for the longest streak by a teenager.

Mat Ishbia agrees to buy Suns, Mercury for $4 billion

By TIM REYNOLDS
AP BASKETBALL WRITER

Mortgage executive Mat Ishbia has agreed in principle to buy a majority stake of the Phoenix Suns and Phoenix Mercury from the embattled owner Robert Sarver for $4 billion, the sides announced Tuesday.

The sale is expected to take several weeks to complete. Ishbia — who is chairman, president and chief executive of United Wholesale Mortgage, which bills itself as the nation's largest mortgage lender — will be subjected to a vetting process by the NBA, and once that is complete, the league's board of governors will have to approve the sale.

The board isn't scheduled to meet until March, though it could convene virtually if the vetting process is completed beforehand.

Forbes recently listed Ishbia's net worth at $5.1 billion. Ishbia is a former Michigan State player under coach Tom Izzo, and was a member of the Spartans' NCAA championship team in 2000.

"I am extremely excited to be the next Governor of the Phoenix Suns and Mercury," Ishbia said in a statement Tuesday night. "Both teams have an incredibly dynamic fan base and I have loved experiencing the energy of the Valley over the last few months.

"Basketball is at the core of my life, from my high school days as a player to the honor of playing for Coach Izzo and winning a national title at Michigan State University. I've spent the last two decades building my mortgage business, United Wholesale Mortgage, into the number one mortgage lender in America and I'm confident that we can bring that same level of success to these great organizations on and off the floor."

If the sale closes at $4 billion, it would be the largest purchase in NBA history. Joe Tsai bought the Brooklyn Nets and Barclays Center for $3.3 billion in 2019, and Tilman Fertitta purchased the Houston Rockets for $2.2 billion in 2017.

The only other NBA franchise known to be sold for $2 billion or more was the Los Angeles Clippers to Steve Ballmer in 2014.

"I had a great call with fellow Spartan Mat Ishbia congratulating him on his purchase of the Phoenix Suns," Magic Johnson, another Michigan State alum, tweeted Tuesday. "He's going to do great things not only for the Suns organization, but for the entire league. All of the other 29 NBA teams better watch out because Mat's a winner!"

Justin Ishbia, Mat's brother, also will be part of the ownership group, pending approval. Mat Ishbia will be the team's governor, Justin the alternate governor.

Suns coach Monty Williams said he didn't want to comment until the move is official.

"Google-searching people and trying to make assessments about who they are, I think that's dangerous," Williams said. "People have done that with me and I just kind of laugh."

Ishbia's company is built around team aspects, and he often speaks of the lessons he learned while playing for Tom Izzo and with Mateen Cleaves at Michigan State. His company even has an intramural basketball program with an on-site full-court gym.

"This is not that complicated," Ishbia recently told HBO's "Real Sports with Bryant Gumbel" for a profile, discussing his strategy with people. "Get the best people to join your team, just like in sports. Train them, coach them to be the best version of themselves, like Izzo used to do with us. And then treat them so well that they never want to leave."

The NBA suspended Sarver in September for one year, plus fined him $10 million, after an investigation found he had engaged in what the league called "workplace misconduct and organizational deficiencies."

The punishment came nearly a year after the NBA asked a law firm to investigate allegations that Sarver had a history of racist, misogynistic and hostile incidents over his nearly two-decade tenure overseeing the franchise.

Shortly afterward, Sarver announced he would be looking to sell the Suns and the Mercury.

Sarver bought the Suns in 2004 for $401 million — then an NBA record, and roughly 10 times less than the price Ishbia agreed to pay.

"Mat is the right leader to build on franchise legacies of winning and community support and shepherd the Suns and Mercury into the next era," Sarver said. "As a former collegiate basketball player and national champion, Mat has exactly the right spirit, commitment and resources to pursue championships."

Ishbia has been mentioned before as a possible buyer of pro franchises, and he is a prominent Michigan State donor. He helped fund the $95 million deal that the Spartans gave football coach Mel Tucker last year. He played in 48 games for Izzo during his time as a walk-on guard in East Lansing.

Ishbia in November confirmed to The Associated Press his interest in buying the NFL's Washington Commanders after owners Dan and Tanya Snyder hired a firm to explore potential transactions. It was not immediately clear if buying the Suns would take him out of the process with the Commanders.

"This is a dream come true for my entire family including my parents, my three children, and my brother Justin, who will be making a significant investment with me and bring his incredible business acumen and shared passion for basketball," Ishbia said. "I appreciate Robert Sarver's time and support throughout the process. We are so honored to be, with approval by the NBA, the next stewards of the Phoenix Suns and Phoenix Mercury."

Millions jam Buenos Aires streets to celebrate World Cup win

BUENOS AIRES, Argentina (AP)—A parade to celebrate the Argentine World Cup champions was abruptly cut short Tuesday as millions of people poured onto thoroughfares, highways and overpasses in a chaotic attempt to catch a glimpse of the national team that won one of the great World Cup finals of all time.

So many jubilant, flag-waving fans swarmed the capital that the players had to abandon the open-air bus transporting them to Buenos Aires and board helicopters for a capital flyover that the government billed as an aerial parade.

"The world champions are flying over the whole route on helicopters because it was impossible to continue by land due to the explosion of people's happiness," Gabriela Cerruti, the spokesperson for President Alberto Fernández, wrote on social media.

After flying over key points of Buenos Aires where fans had gathered, the helicopters returned to the headquarters of the Argentine Football Association outside the capital.

Some fans continued celebrating in the streets, while others headed out of Buenos Aires with long faces, complaining they were unable to pay their respects to the team that brought home the country's first World Cup trophy since 1986.

"We're angry because the government didn't organize this properly so we could all celebrate," said Diego Benavídez, 25, who had been waiting since early morning to see the team. "They stole the World Cup from us."

Others, however, took it in stride.

"I'm not disappointed, we lived the party," said Nicolás López, 33, who was in downtown Buenos Aires with his 7-year-old daughter.

AP

The Argentine soccer team that won the World Cup title ride on top of an open bus during their homecoming parade in Buenos Aires, Argentina, Tuesday, Dec. 20, 2022.

The parade was suspended shortly after two people jumped from a bridge onto the open-top bus carrying the players. One made it inside the bus, the other fell onto the pavement.

Football association head Claudio Tapia blamed law enforcement for the changeup of plans. "The same security organisms that were escorting us are not allowing us to move forward," Tapia wrote on social media. "I apologize in the name of all the champion players."

Toward nightfall, when most of the fans had already poured out of downtown Buenos Aires, there were isolated clashes between a few stragglers and law enforcemen. At least eight people were injured, according to local media reports.

The incidents began when firefighters went to the Obelisk, the iconic Buenos Aires landmark that is the traditional site of celebrations, to evict a few people who had broken their way inside the monument.

The bus had been moving at a snail's pace for more than four hours through the throngs of humanity before the overland parade was cut short. Team Captain Lionel Messi and the rest of the players waved at the massive crowd as they carried the World Cup trophy aloft after securing the country's third title.

"This is madness, it's indescribable," said Brian Andreassi, 23, as he walked downtown wearing the team's jersey. "There are no words."

The World Cup and the success of the Messi-led squad brought much-needed good news for a country stuck for years in economic doldrums and suffering one of the world's highest inflation rates, with nearly 4-in-10 people living in poverty.

"There's an immense union among all Argentines — unity, happiness. It's as if you can breathe another air, there's another energy in the air," said Victoria Roldán. "My body and heart are about to burst."

Carrying a World Cup replica, the 32-year-old and her 36-year-old sister, Mariana, were eager to catch a glimpse of the team and in particular its captain, Messi.

"We're dying to see him," Roldán said. "Seeing him with that immense smile, with those bright eyes filled with hope, it really fills our heart with joy and happiness. ... I think that Leo has deserved it for years, and this was his moment."

The players were all smiles as they watched the multitudes hostling to get as close as possible to the bus. An estimated 4 million people were in the streets by Tuesday afternoon, according to local media citing police sources.

"I celebrate the way the people took to the streets to honor our squad," President Alberto Fernández wrote on social media after the parade was cut short.

Celebrating fans took over highways, avenues and the access routes into the capital as temperatures climbed to 30 degrees Celsius (86 degrees Fahrenheit).

Thousands had set up camp since early Tuesday morning at the Obelisk.

The Argentine president declared a national holiday Tuesday so the country could celebrate the World Cup victory.

The song "Muchachos," which was written by a fan and became a popular unofficial anthem for the Argentine team at the World Cup, filled the streets as fans joined in singing it over and over again.

Some fans also paid tribute to Argentine soccer legend Diego Maradona, the captain of the 1986 squad that won the World Cup and who died two years ago, with flags bearing his name and face. "This is for Diego, who's seeing it from heaven," fans chanted.

"This is a party. The last time Argentina was a champion I was 3 years old, I don't remember anything," said Yael Torchinsky, 39. "I want to live this intensely because the Argentine people need this happiness."

By mid-afternoon, fans started filling up Plaza de Mayo in front of Government House, amid rumors the players might go there for a reprise of the festivities for Argentina's 1986 World Cup victory that were held there. Fernández's administration had offered the palatial mansion, popularly known as the Casa Rosada, or Pink House, according to Security Minister Aníbal Fernández.

The raucous welcome for the team began before dawn as thousands of fans lined up upon their return from Qatar.

The players were beaming as they descended from their plane in Ezeiza, outside Argentina's capital, shortly before 3 a.m. onto a red carpet. Messi was the first one out, carrying the World Cup trophy, flanked by coach Lionel Scaloni, who put his arm around the captain as they walked past a sign that read, "Thank you, champions."

The team was welcomed by rock band La Mosca singing "Muchachos," and several players, including Messi, could be seen singing the words as they boarded the bus taking them to the Argentine Football Association headquarters.

It took the bus an hour to travel the 11 kilometers (6.8 miles) from the airport to AFA headquarters, where the players were welcomed with fireworks, and then spent the night. In the morning, Messi posted a photo on social media showing him hugging the World Cup trophy next to him while he slept.

Sources: Giants postpone Correa intro for medical concern

By RONALD BLUM
AP BASEBALL WRITER

The San Francisco Giants postponed a news conference Tuesday to introduce Carlos Correa after a medical concern arose during the All-Star shortstop's physical, according to two people with direct knowledge of the situation.

The people spoke to The Associated Press on condition of anonymity Tuesday because the Giants have not announced publicly any details regarding Correa's $350 million, 13-year agreement, not even that Tuesday's availability was to introduce the prized free agent.

One person confirmed that Tuesday's conference to welcome Correa was put on hold because the sides were awaiting the results of testing. A second person said that a medical issue was flagged during Correa's physical.

Correa and the Giants agreed on Dec. 13 to the massive deal, subject to a successful physical, according to one of the people. Correa has been placed on the injured list seven times during his eight-year career.

The media availability had been scheduled for 11 a.m. PST at Oracle Park, but it was called off about three hours before it was to take place. The Giants did not provide an explanation as to why.

It was not clear if the sides had discussed renegotiating Correa's agreement.

Correa, the 2015 AL Rookie of the Year, has a .279 career average with 155 homers and 553 RBIs in eight big league seasons. He also has been a stellar postseason performer with 18 homers and 59 RBIs in 79 games.

Just about the only knock on Correa's resume is durability. He has played at least 150 games in a season just once because of various injuries.

Correa was a free agent one year ago after leaving the Houston Astros, and he reached a $105.3 million deal with the Minnesota Twins. That agreement gave the two-time All-Star the right to opt out after one year and $35.1 million to hit the market again.

The 28-year-old Correa terminated his deal and went back on the free-agent market.

Correa's guarantee from the Giants would be the fourth-largest in baseball history. Mike Trout got a $426.5 million, 12-year contract with the Los Angeles Angels, Mookie Betts has a $365 million, 12-year agreement with the Los Angeles Dodgers and Aaron Judge is getting $360 million for nine years to remain with the New York Yankees in an agreement announced Tuesday.

Correa hit .291 with 22 home runs and 64 RBIs in his one season with Minnesota. He was selected by Houston with the No. 1 overall pick in the 2012 amateur draft, and he played a key role in the Astros' rise from the bottom of the AL West to the franchise's first World Series title in 2017.

The Astros' championship was tainted by a sign-stealing scheme, and Correa has been lustily booed in some cities since the scandal surfaced.

Brandon Crawford, a three-time All-Star, has been the Giants' shortstop since 2011. Crawford, who turns 36 next month, slumped to a .231 average with nine homers and 52 RBIs last season while dealing with injuries, down from a .298 average with 24 homers and 90 RBIs in 2021.

Crawford has a $16 million salary in 2023, then can become a free agent. He has dealt with injuries in recent seasons and might consider retirement at the conclusion of his deal, so the Giants were searching for a shortstop of the future.

The Giants went 81-81 last season, a year after winning a franchise-record 107 games and the NL West.

San Jose wins back-to-back in women's division

By MARK RABAGO
mark_rabago@saipantribune.com
ASSOCIATE EDITOR

San Jose won its first game of the season in its last outing then followed it up with an upset of favored San Vicente last Saturday in the women's division of the 2022 Marianas Village Pride Basketball League.

San Vicente essentially played San Jose to a standstill majority of the game until a late rally by the latter caught the former by surprise.

San Jose finally took the lead with five minutes left in the ballgame and former national player Irish Pagarao gave them a 42-40 lead time down to 4:05.

Werly Breakenridge then made it a 4-point spread, 44-40, before Mary Kay Alferos' 3 made it 47-40 with 1:40 left in the contest,

Angel Roligat had a personal 4-0 run on a triple and a split from the free throw line to make it 47-44 with less than 20 seconds left.

However, that was San Vicente's last gasp as they missed triples that could've forced overtime.

Pagarao had a team-high 13 points for the victors, which also got 11 from Alferos. Destiny Pangelinan was unstoppable in the first half with her 3-point bombs, but the national player sputtered in the end. Pangelinan still wound up with a game-high 23 points, while Roligat added 8 in support.

The win improved San Jose's record to 2-5, while San Vicente dropped only its second game in six tries.

In other results last Saturday, Kagman won via default against Oleai in the boys 13 division. It was Kagman's sixth win in seven games, while Oleai dropped to 4-4.

In the boys 18, Tanapag beat San Antonio, 60-51, for its fourth win against a single loss. Tanapag was led by the 17 points of Gino Rasg and 10 points of Nobet Hocog.

Results of Sunday's games will be published in tomorrow's issue of *Saipan Tribune*.

San Jose 47 – Pagarao 13, Alferos 11, Breakenridge 6, Lee 6, Pablo 5, Pena 4, Kenty 2.

San Vicente 44 – Pangelinan 23, Roligat 8, Sagarino 4, Cabrera 4, Ramos 3, Deleon Guerrero 2.

Scoring by halves: 25-25, 47-44.

MARK RABAGO

San Jose's Irish Pagarao drives to the hoop against San Vicente in the women's division of the 2022 Marianas Village Pride Basketball League last Saturday at the Gillette Multi-Purpose Center.

Northern Marianas Cup moved to Ada Gym

By MARK RABAGO
mark_rabago@saipantribune.com
ASSOCIATE EDITOR

CNMI Weightlifting has moved the venue for the Northern Marianas Cup Weightlifting Tournament set for Jan. 7 from the Pedro P. Tenorio Multi-Purpose Center in Susupe to the Gilbert C. Ada Gymnasium.

"Our competition at the multi-purpose center was preempted by the CNMI government (inauguration), now the event will be at the former Pacific Mini Games office at the Ada Gym," said CNMI Weightlifting president John Davis.

The Northern Marianas Cup Weightlifting Tournament is expected to have competition in the youth, junior, and senior divisions with 10 male and 10 female weight categories.

Davis said the competition will be one of several qualifying events for selection of the 2023 CNMI Weightlifting National Team.

Entry fee is $20 for non-members, while CNMI Weightlifting members get to compete for free.

Entry forms can be obtained from CNMI Weightlifting secretary Jeanne Rayphand at the Northern Marianas Protection & Advocacy Systems, Inc. office in Gualo Rai.

Entries must be received by CNMI Weightlifting's Rayphand on or before Dec. 31, 2022.

For more information about the Northern Marianas Cup Weightlifting Tournament, call Jeanne Rayphand, (670) 287-9807 or (670) 235-7273.

Of the 38 medals won overall by the CNMI in the Northern Marianas Pacific Mini Games 2022, weightlifting bagged 23 gold that also included 10 silver and two bronze medals.

Gold medals were won by Ray Santos and David Barnhouse (three apiece), Angel San Nicolas, Jason Limes (two each), and Joey Colisao (one).

The 10 silvers were three each from Leo Apelo and Antonette Labausa, two from Colisao, and one apiece from Leowel Cristobal and Angel San Nicolas. Riella Ann Ichiou and Jason Limes then delivered the two bronze medals for Team NMI.

MARK RABAGO

Gold medalist Angel San Nicolas in action during the Northern Marianas Pacific Mini Games 2022 at the Marianas High School Gymnasium last June.

BASA

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too far behind at 3.61m.

Shot put

Joey Colisao's 9.61m heave of the shot put landed him in first place in the men's open division. Lyle Andrew threw a close second with a 9.55m distance; third place went to Omari Joab with a distance of 9.15m.

In the master's division, Greg Borja threw the heavy ball into a distance of 7.6m, followed by Rangamar's 6.8m, then Wania's 6.5m throw.

Close to 66 participants joined the last Northern Marianas Athletics Track and Field Challenge of the year, with the next meets to happen next year again.

TEAM

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said Kimura.

He then went on to thank the Northern Marianas Swimming Federation and their legion of supporters for making their trip to the Land Down Under a success.

"As a coach of this CNMI National Swimming Team I'm so proud and really would like to thank NMSF president Colin Thompson and vice president John Hirsh, swimmers and their parents, all Tsunami Saipan parents and donors, Hiroko Tenorio, and my wife and Tsunami team manager Yuko Kimura. Not only Saipan people, but also some of Japanese people support us, letting us use their pool, dormitory, and also providing transportation! Without their support and help, we've never made this great result."

Before arriving in Australia, Kimura and the CNMI national swimmers had a stopover in Japan where they reunited with former national swimmer Juhn Tenorio in a mini swim camp.

All four CNMI swimmers contributed in the nine national records broken.

Aleksenko broke four NMI records—the 100m butterfly, 200m butterfly, 50m freestyle, and 50m backstroke.

Suzuki, meanwhile, eclipsed his own record in the 200m freestyle.

Batallones, for her part, obliterated the old record in the 50m breastroke and also reset the previous mark in the 100m breastroke.

In the relay, the quartet of Aleksenko, Suzuki, Batallones, and Shoko Litulumar swam a new standard in both the 50m x 4 mixed free relay and mixed medley relay.

CONTRIBUTED PHOTO

CNMI national swimmers Jinnosuke Suzuki, Shoko Litulumar, Isaiah Aleksenko, and Maria Batallones poses with Guam swimmers during a break in the 2022 FINA World Championships in Melbourne, Australia.

AGAPE

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The inaugural ACVT was held in December 2019 and drew a large number of teams for both the men's and women's division.

Event coordinator En Yang Pang said that so far, "the tournament is going on great… I feel really thankful and excited about this opportunity to bring back the Agape Christmas Volleyball Tournament after two years of COVID because our volleyball community really needed this. We are a very grassroots community, so to be able to organize something for them is an honor."

"It began as a dream that the CNMI will be able to elevate its level of volleyball," added Pang.

Teams in this tournament range from groups of friends to high school volleyball teams who are looking for some volleyball action during the break from school.

Pang, who has played volleyball since he was 14 years old, added that "maybe we will have even more tournaments for next year, more players, more teams, more participation. And that will be very nice because we can see more people getting interested in volleyball."

He then observed that volleyball brings everyone together, as team members bring their friends and family members to watch and cheer them on.

The men's teams this season are Saikyo, Asian Airlines, The Parumpapapums, Gentlemen's Association, Bradahood, We 9 Kings, Jingle Boyz, and Naughty List.

The women's teams are Saluta's Helpers, V Fans, Veginners, GG'Z, and Volleybakers.

In 2019, Missile-toe won first place in the men's division and Sweet Digs won the women's championship.

Iszel Esteves, Kristel Encinares, Alyssa Velasco, Cecile Guevarra, Mia Carreon, Michelle Masga, Tazga Deleon Guerrero, Irish Pagarao, and Julia Espino played for Sweet Digs, while En Yang and En Hong Pang, Tychicus Xu, Jason Wang, Dawei Cai, and Mark Puno played for Missile-toe.

Pang then thanked the tournament's sponsors Agape Christian School for the facilities, Gold's Gym Saipan for gym gift certificates to the champions, Fishing Tackle & Sporting Goods for their $300 sponsorship, and F&S Corp. for their $600 sponsorship.

The champions will receive $300, while second place will receive $150.

Results of the tournament will be published in the next issues of *Saipan Tribune*.

For more information, contact En Yang Pang at (670)989-6615, or email fastswimmer-4saipan@gmail.com.

Knicks rout Warriors 132-94, extend win streak to 8 games

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Sports

San Jose wins back-to-back in women's division

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Team NMI coach amazed by swimmers

CONTRIBUTED PHOTO

From left, Jinnosuke Suzuki, Shoko Litulumar, Isaiah Aleksenko, and Maria Batallones pose at the entrance gate for the competition pool of the 2022 FINA World Championships in Melbourne, Australia.

By MARK RABAGO
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ASSOCIATE EDITOR

"More than amazing" is what national swimming coach Hiroyuki Kimiura describes the CNMI National Swimming Team's performance in last week's 2022 FINA World Championships in Melbourne, Australia.

"Nine national records from a single competition! It's more than amazing!" said the Tsunami Saipan Swimming Center head coach.

And to think that Isaiah Aleksenko, Jinnosuke Suzuki, Maria Batallones, and Shoko Litulumar achieved the feat with local swimmers having no official pool for the past couple of years now.

"Of course, everyone will be happy if there's an official competition pool on Saipan. But the most important thing is not where we swim or which facility we use. I keep training our swimmers with that mindset,"

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Basa, Igitol excel in javelin throw of NMA challenge

By LEIGH GASES
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CORRESPONDENT

Tyrik Basa and Maria Igitol excelled in their respective divisions of the javelin throw in the two-day Northern Marianas Athletics Track and Field Challenge last Friday and Saturday at the Oleai Sports Complex.

In Saturday's javelin throw event, Basa threw the javelin the farthest in the men's open division with an impressive distance of 36.09m. Second place Kaipo Dikito was almost 10m behind with a 27.53m distance. Third place went to Lyle Andrew with a distance of 24.32m.

In the women's open division, Igitol's javelin traveled a distance of 20.34m, followed by Zarinae Sapong's 16.73m throw.

Leo Wania was the lone entry in the javelin throw's master's division and threw a distance of 21.80m.

Discus throw

The other field event on Saturday was the discus throw, where Lyle Andrew easily threw the discus to a first-place distance of 30.12m in the men's open division. Sliding into second was Kaipo Dikito's discus at 26.21m and third went to Basa's 26.09m throw.

In the women's open division, Cassandra Camacho threw the discus at an even 21.21m, while Katie Camacho threw at a distance of 19.38m for second place, and Sapong threw the discus at 17.61m for third place.

In the master's division, Derek Chambers threw a distance of 23.86m; Maria Ornes threw the disc at 20.89m; Wania threw the discus at a distance of 20.28m; and Elias Rangamar threw it at 17.66m.

Long jump

In the long jump event on Friday, Alexander Camacho leaped the farthest distance of 5.02m, followed by Michael Rodgers' distance of 4.72m, and Orrin Pharmin's 4.21m.

In the master's division, Wania bagged first with a leap of 3.95m with Greg Borja not

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LEIGH GASES

Tyrik Basa sets up for the discus throw in the NMA Track and Field Challenge last Saturday at the Oleai Sports Complex.

Agape's Annual Christmas V-ball Tournament returns

LEIGH GASES

Asian Airline's Dylan Lee, left, attempts to block a spike from the Gentlemen's Association setter Allen Luo during their Agape Christmas Volleyball Tournament game Tuesday night at the Agape Gymnasium.

By LEIGH GASES
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CORRESPONDENT

The Agape Christmas Volleyball Tournament returned on Saturday, Dec. 17, just in time for the holiday break, with games held at the Agape Gymnasium.

The men's division started last Saturday, Dec. 17 from 8am to 6pm and will continue to play for two weeks every Monday, Tuesday, Thursday, and Friday nights from 6pm to 9pm, until the championship games on Friday, Dec. 30.

The annual tournament, which is in its fourth edition, was absent for two years due to the COVID-19 pandemic, but is now back with five women's teams and eight men's teams vying for first place in their respective divisions.

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